

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

Thursday, February 15, 2007

(Rescheduled from Wednesday, February 14, 2007 due to weather conditions)

9:30 a.m.

College Township Municipal Building

Minutes

Voting Members

Kent Baker	College Township
Dave Modricker	Ferguson Township
Brent Brubaker	Patton Township
Bill MacMath	Spring Township
Amy Story	State College Borough
Bob Jacobs	Centre County Planning & Community Development Office (CCPCDO)
Chris Price	CCPCDO
Karen Michael	PennDOT District 2-0
Harold Nanovic	PennDOT Central Office
Hugh Mose	CATA
Michele Barbin	Mountaintop Planning Region
Doug Weikel	Benner Township
Ray Hankinson	Penns Valley Planning Region
Paul Weener	Harris Township

Non-Voting Members

Teresa Davis	Penn State University
Sue Hannegan	Bellefonte Borough

Others Present:

Tom Zilla	Centre Regional Planning Agency (CRPA)
Trish Meek	CRPA
Mike Bloom	Centre County Planning & Community Development Office (CCPCDO)
Bert Kisner	Citizen
Ann Glaser	Citizen

1. Call to Order

Mr. Baker called the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m.

2. Election of Officers

Mr. MacMath made motion to retain Kent Baker as Chair and Hugh Mose as Vice-Chair of the MPO Transportation Committee. Ms. Michael seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

3. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Mose made a motion to approve the January 10, 2007 meeting minutes. Ms. Barbin seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

4. Citizens' Comments

There were no comments for items not on the agenda.

5. Final Draft FY 2007-08 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Mr. Zilla noted that a final draft UPWP was included with the agenda. He reviewed that this Work Program has to be adopted every year in February. It lists the work tasks for MPO staff and important actions that will be taken by the MPO Coordinating Committee.

Mr. Zilla reviewed new tasks in this Work Program. One of these is the preparation of the 2009-2012 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). He said that some of the projects that were added to the current TIP include projects in Pine Grove Mills on Route 26, Potters Mills on Route 322, Rush Township on Route 350, the Whitehall Road widening project and North Atherton Street signals. As these projects are developed, the MPO staff will have some involvement. Another task next year will be to come up with a specific process for how CMAQ funds are allocated. Another big item for staff will be implementing any changes that come out of the MPO Performance Review Committee. Mr. Zilla said that there are state-wide workgroups that have been formed on "right-sizing" and "smart transportation" and staff will be serving on those in the next year. Staff would also like to collect traffic counts before and after the opening of I-99 in order to track changes in traffic.

Reviewing the supplemental planning fund requests, Mr. Zilla stated that the Coordinating Committee authorized staff to submit two candidate projects to PennDOT. The top priority was the concept of coordinating land use and transportation planning. Mr. Zilla reviewed a couple examples of key areas of development including the SR 64/550 corridor area near Zion and the Halfmoon/Patton Township boundary. Supplemental funds will allow staff to help the municipalities with a long-term look at the transportation impacts.

Priority number two was to submit a request for funds to do an assessment of public transportation services in the county. This would look at CATA and the County van service to see what efficiencies there might be between the two. This is in response to a request from the County Commissioners in late December. The intent of this project would be to evaluate a full range of issues for integrating the services provided by CATA and the Centre County Office of Transportation. Mr. Zilla said this would be completed as Part II of the Human Services Transportation Plan, which is in the current UPWP.

Mr. Zilla noted that the Human Services Plan is undergoing changes right now in response to PennDOT direction. PennDOT is requiring that MPOs adopt a Human Services Plan to assure eligibility for certain funds by May 31, 2007. Staff's intent is to use the money available now to get a plan in place and if the Part II money comes in, staff will have time to make modifications as needed to the Human Services Plan. That Plan will provide much of the foundation work for the study of how to coordinate CATA and the County van service.

Mr. Weener asked for more information about the Human Services Plan and asked if this would provide more money. Mr. Zilla said that this would make CATA eligible for funding that was not accessible in the past. Mr. Mose said there are three separate categories of funding in SAFETEA-LU. The one that CATA is focusing on is called Jobs Access Reverse Commute (JARC). This is a pre-existing program, but before SAFETEA-LU it was allocated via congressional earmark and CATA had never received any of that funding. The second component is Section 5310, which is the

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elderly/handicapped category of funding. New Freedom is a third pot of funding, designed to provide resources for communities that provide service to people with disabilities above and beyond what is required. Mr. Mose said that CATA has been focusing on JARC funding because they saw this as possible funding for regional commuter bus service. The Human Services Plan is necessary for all three of the programs.

Mr. Zilla reviewed the funding in the UPWP, saying that the MPO is receiving the usual three percent increase in FHWA funding. There is a new base level of Federal Transit Administration funds. There was a 26 percent increase in 2006/07, but that has been adjusted back a bit for next year. This is still more than the MPO was receiving two years ago. He noted that the local officials contribute much more than is required, which allows for four dedicated transportation planners. Mr. Zilla also reviewed the schedule, saying that the UPWP must be submitted to PennDOT at the end of February.

Mr. Nanovic noted that the supplemental funding for the two projects that were submitted has been tentatively approved; however the official document has not been released yet.

Mr. Mose said that last week the Governor came forward with an aggressive transportation funding program that would generate a considerable amount of money on both the Highway/Bridge and the Public Transportation sides. He asked if the UPWP has enough flexibility to accommodate any changes that might be required. Mr. Zilla thought that it did. He said that the LRTP would act as a guide, spelling out the priorities. If there is an effort to revisit Corridor O1 or SCCCTS, that would require a different level of community involvement and resources would have to be shifted. On the Transit side, the only wildcard would be whatever comes out of the County/CATA assessment.

Mr. Modricker made a motion recommending that the Coordinating Committee adopt the FY 2007-08 UPWP. Ms. Story seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

6. Centre County Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) 2007 Update

Ms. Meek said that staff is not asking for a recommendation on this item today because FHWA provided additional information right before the meeting. She wanted members to have time to review that before acting upon it in March.

As part of the SAFETEA-LU requirements, the MPO must adopt a Public Participation Plan. This is tied to compliance with a number of existing laws such as environmental justice, Title 6 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. This requirement ensures that the transportation planning process and program is open and accessible to all individuals of the public. Currently, outreach techniques include how we handle meetings, advertising and announcements on CNET, mailings and emails, and the information on the Web site. The Plan also looks at public participation for major MPO activities such as the LRTP, the TIP, the Public Participation Plan and special studies. For each of those, staff has outlined each step they will take to let the public know about the development of the plan.

Reviewing recommended public participation techniques, Ms. Meek said that some of these are required by the new legislation. Staff will perform an annual review of the Public Participation Plan with the use of surveys and input to determine if the information is getting to the Centre County audience. Staff will also start to look at demographics in detail to review where direct marketing is needed. Interested parties will be added to the mailing list as well and the website will be made interactive in the next year. Ms. Meek said staff plans to put out an annual report and brochures that

target specific audiences. Surveys are a requirement in the new laws and staff will also increase their environmental justice efforts.

Mr. Baker asked about the effectiveness of advertising in the newspaper. Ms. Meek said that staff advertises in the three major papers in the county and this is required by law.

Mr. Meek said that FHWA has submitted comments on the Public Participation Plan and she asked that members also provide comments. Staff will revise the Plan based on comments received and present it again in March to consider authorizing a 45-day public comment period, as required.

7. PennDOT District 2-0 Bridge Program Presentation

Ms. Michael reviewed some of the history of bridge building in the Commonwealth. In the mid-1960s, there were several catastrophes in the country and in response, enacted the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1968. Out of this came the National Bridge Inspection Standards (NBIS). There were still two concerns at this time. First, bridge repair and replacement needs exceeded funding. Also, the NBIS activity was limited to Federal Aid highway bridges. This meant that non-federal aid bridges were not covered and inspection was not mandatory. Due to these concerns, the Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1978 was enacted, which established the funding mechanism for bridge replacement. It also required all public bridges over 20 feet in length to be inspected and inventoried.

Ms. Michael said that in 1983, Pennsylvania put into place the Billion Dollar Bridge Program. This developed criteria for selection, stated that the greatest need bridges would be replaced first, and defined structurally deficient and functionally obsolete bridges. Ms. Michael said that there are three areas that PennDOT looks at when inspecting a bridge: the super structure, the sub structure, and the stream and area around the bridge. PennDOT gives the bridge a rating of 1-7 and if one of those ratings goes down to a 4, it becomes a "structurally deficient" bridge. She said that a "functionally obsolete" bridge involves alignment, geometric or width problems.

PennDOT in Harrisburg has recently completed a risk assessment of all the state-owned bridges in the Commonwealth. The risk factor is based on several factors, resulting in a guide for rating bridges. PennDOT District 2-0 averages 15-20 bridges replacements each year across the entire nine-county area. District 2-0 has been concentrating on structurally deficient bridges. In Centre County, 13.9 percent of the bridges are structurally deficient. The goal for the state is 10 percent.

Ms. Michael reviewed which bridges in Centre County are programmed:

- Spruce Run Bridge – under construction, completion in 2007
- Bush Hollow Run Bridge – under construction, completion in 2007
- Township Road 510 Bridge – replacement project over Penns Creek, let date 3/8/07
- Penns Creek Bridge – currently in preliminary design, schedule for fall 2008 bid let.
- Moshannon Creek Bridge – currently in preliminary engineering, bid let late in 2008
- Marsh Creek Bridge – scheduled for a spring 2009 bid let
- Muddy Creek Bridge – scheduled for a summer 2009 bid let
- Township Road 523 Back Road Bridge – currently closed, summer 2009 bid let

Mr. Baker said that it looked like District 2-0 was replacing about two bridges in Centre County per year. He asked how many there are that are deficient. Ms. Michael said that for Centre County, there are 60 structurally deficient bridges out of 433. Ms. Michael also noted that there are an additional 60 bridges owned by Centre County municipalities.

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Mr. Weener asked if there have been changes in materials used to construct bridges. Ms. Michael said that there have been some changes, but not significant ones. Mr. Kisner said that the bridges built in 1930 had a factor of safety of 24, making them “over-designed.” They could deteriorate, but still be considered safe. Recent bridges are designed with much less factor of safety, so the deterioration becomes very important.

Mr. Zilla said that staff is questioning whether the project ranking criteria should be used for bridges. PennDOT has to deal with unforeseen circumstances, such as collapse, and they have to react to the rate of change in the structure of the bridges. For these reasons, staff is wondering if bridges should be more heavily driven by PennDOT’s inspection and prioritization than by the MPO’s project ranking criteria. There is still a question about how to deal with municipal bridges.

Mr. MacMath said that bridges do not score very well in the ranking process. Bridge funds have been used for years for bridge replacements, but the MPO may have to start looking at using other types of funds for this. Mr. Zilla said that the reason the project ranking criteria was developed was to be able to address projects where funds might be flexed.

Mr. Hankinson asked how often the bridges are inspected. Ms. Michael said they are inspected every year or two. Mr. Hankinson referred to the Spring Mills Bridge, saying that 16 stringers were replaced and now the entire bridge is being replaced. Ms. Michael said that the department needs three to four years lead time for replacements.

Ms. Hannegan asked if PennDOT notifies the municipality about deficient bridges. Ms. Michael said that each year there is a contract for inspection and the report goes to the host municipality. She did not know if there was any outreach by PennDOT other than the consultant coordinating with the municipality if there is a problem.

Mr. Baker said that he has received the reports and was not sure whether they actually say whether bridges are structurally deficient or obsolete. Ms. Michael said that they should. If any of the criteria is a “4” or less, it is structurally deficient.

Mr. Weener asked what responsibility PennDOT has for municipal bridges and how those fit into the process. Ms. Michael said that the owner of the bridge is responsible for the upkeep and must petition the MPO for funding. The MPO decides how much money goes to municipal bridges. Mr. Zilla added that the bridge must be 20 feet or more to be eligible for federal funds, but state funds can be used for shorter bridges. He said that typically the MPO reacts to a municipal request. Mr. Nanovic said that if a municipality requests federal funding, the bridge will have to be built to federal standards, which increases the price. The local share will also increase. Sometimes it is more realistic to use state funds because federal standards do not have to be met.

Mr. Weener asked how PennDOT defines a bridge. Ms. Michael said that the federal standard is a 20 foot span and the state standard is 8 feet.

Ms. Michael said that when the Risk Assessment report is done, which should be in the next two weeks, a lot of the criteria can be put into the ranking criteria. That way, the MPO will have the same type of risk factors that PennDOT is looking at. Mr. Bloom said there is a whole host of things that are being looked at when ranking bridges, but he felt that it should better match what PennDOT is using.

Mr. Hankinson said that time is needed to design, engineer and build a bridge. If the MPO were to go to a quicker cycle, based on a better set of information, he asked if it would be possible with a one-year lead cycle instead of two. Ms. Michael said that if PennDOT gets approval for funding, it takes about six months to get a consultant on board. Typically, it takes 18 months for preliminary engineering, including environmental clearance. It takes another 12-18 months for final design and construction takes 1-2 years.

Mr. Modricker commented that the Technical Committee should try to find a way to keep the ranking simple.

8. Funding for Pennsylvania's Transportation System

Mr. Zilla said that the origin of the Transportation Funding and Reform Commission's (TRFC) Report started with the transit funding challenges that became critical in the last couple of years. In 2005, the nine-member Commission was formed to study the operations, structure and funding for transit, highways and bridges. The Governor then flexed money to transit, which also included additional funding for roads and bridges. Some of the charges of the TRFC were audits of several transit operators, recommended levels and sources of funding and identifying funding sources that are reliable, dedicated and inflation-sensitive. Another charges was to evaluate the relationship of growth and development patterns with transportation systems to encourage patterns that are transit friendly.

Clearly, the report confirmed the gap between needs and funding. Giving examples, Mr. Zilla said that we are greater than two percent over the national average of structurally deficient bridges. Since 1997, PennDOT has lost about \$350 million in purchasing power due to inflation. On the transit side, the loss of federal operating revenue, limits on the state revenue, and inflation have had negative impacts. The cost of fuel, health care and pensions have also impacted transit.

Mr. Zilla reviewed some of the highway and bridge goals that the TFRC set out for themselves. First, reduce the number of structurally deficient bridges to the national average in 17 years. Another goal is to implement safety features to reduce the number of fatalities by 25 every year. The recommendation was to provide an additional \$1 billion annually for roads and bridges (a significant increase). Mr. Zilla reviewed the funding to make up this amount.

On the public transportation side, one goal is to provide sufficient funds to stabilize and expand public transit. Instituting effective performance measures and improved business practices for the operators and a complete restructuring of the state funding program were other goals. Mr. Zilla said that the recommendations include an additional \$820 million annually for transit. He said that one key recommendation is restructuring the state funding program. This would include the establishment of a dedicated state transit trust fund, streamlining the structure, linking funding to need and performance and strengthening the accountability of transit to make sure that funding is being spent properly.

Mr. Zilla gave an overview of the Governor's plan. Basically, he is considering the same amounts of money that were recommended by the TFRC. Approximately \$965 million for highways would come from leasing the Pennsylvania Turnpike. The money for transit (\$760 million) would come from a 6.71 percent tax on oil company gross profits, beginning in March 2008. He thought that the Governor was trying to avoid taxes and fees that go directly against tax payers.

Mr. Weener said that leasing the Turnpike seems to be an admission of failure on the part of the Turnpike Authority. A private company is going to pay \$965 million to lease it and they are going

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to make a profit on that deal, so they must be going to be more efficient than the state at running it. Mr. Nanovic said that he has not seen any major improvement on the highways that have already been taken over by private companies in other states. He did not think there would be a major change in the condition of the Pennsylvania Turnpike.

Mr. Mose said that this is just a starting point and there is a lot of ground to be covered before the General Assembly packages everything together to send back to the Governor. He said that on the transit side, the Commission Report included a recommendation on replacing the existing transit funding program with a simplified structure. This would be based on two factors – the number of passengers carried and the number of hours of transit service provided. A community like ours will do very well under that formula. One thing that was included in the recommendation, but was not included in the Governor's budget message was the matter of local funding. Currently, CATA averages about 15 percent of local funding. The recommendation was to maintain that level of match with the existing funds, but have a higher level of match with any new money. That was problematic with many areas of the state and, as a result, the Governor did not mention that in his plan.

9. Announcements

Mr. Baker reviewed future meeting dates.

10. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 11:25 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Z. Shingler
Recording Secretary