

MINUTES

SHENANGO VALLEY METROPOLITAN
PLANNING ORGANIZATION COORDINATING COMMITTEE
VIRTUAL MEETING
Tuesday, February 9, 2021 – 10:30 A.M.

PERSONS PRESENT

Jeremy Coxe
Cindy Black
Mary Kay Mattocks
Paul Hamill
Erin Houston
Kim DiCintio
Matthew Crea
Carrie Machuga
Holly Nogay
William Staph
Richard Stachel
Stone R. Helsel
Courtney Lyle
Travis Siegel
Darrell Chapman
Brandon Leach
Laura Moore
Gene Porochniak
Kevin McCullough
Ken Robertson
Ashley Tracy
Sandy Swogger
Brad Elder
Holly Arms
Tom McClelland
Ron Johnson
Emily Aloiz
Ed Reese
Heather Maurer
Kristin Mulkerin
Bob Fiscus
Bob Lark
Gary Lowers
Diane Helbig
Gary Hittle
Brian Barnhizer
Matt Stewart
Dan Gracenin

REPRESENTING

Hermitage City
Wilmington Township
Grove City Borough
Greenville Borough
Shenango Valley Urban League
Mercer County Regional Council of Governments
PennDOT
McCormick Taylor
Mercer County Housing Authority
PennDOT
Pine Township
Springfield Township
PennDOT
Northwest RPO
PennDOT, District 1-4
PennDOT
State Representative Tim Bonner
Federal Highway Administration
PennDOT
Sharpsville Borough
McCormick Taylor
Mercer County Area Agency on Aging
Mercer County Bridge Department
State Representative Parke Wentling
PennDOT
PennDOT
Erie County MPO
GPD Group
State Representative Mark Longietti
PennDOT
Sharon City
West Middlesex Borough
Pymatuning Township
State Senator Michele Brooks
Hempfield Township
MCRPC
MCRPC
MCRPC

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Matt Stewart called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. **A quorum was present.**

ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

Mr. Jeremy Coxe mentioned that annually we appoint a Chair and Vice-Chair. He indicated that currently he holds the position as Chair and Mr. Gary Hittle serves as Vice-Chair. Both stated that they are willing to continue if the board would like to go in the same direction. The floor was open for any other nominations. There being none, Mr. Robertson made a motion to close the nominations and retain Jeremy Coxe as Chair and Gary Hittle as Vice-Chair for 2021. Mr. Stachel seconded. The motion passed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 10, 2020

Mr. Coxe stated that the Minutes were sent out with the meeting packet and asked if there were any additions, corrections or deletions to the Minutes of the November 9, 2020 meeting. There being none, Mr. Coxe asked for a motion to approve. Mr. Hamill so moved, Mr. Stachel seconded. The motion passed.

2021-2024 TIP MODIFICATIONS

Mr. Coxe introduced Brandon Leach who has been our new central office Planning Specialist Supervisor, taking over Dan Keane's former role, for those not already aware. Mr. Leach stated that there were a total of 5 administrative modifications and 1 amendment. Modification #1 was a cost increase to Old Mercer Road Bridge in the preliminary engineering, final design and construction phases. Amendment #1 was for an All Weather Pavement Markers Project, which was added to the 2021 TIP. This amendment was approved via eBallot on 12/14/2020 by the Shenango Valley Coordinating Committee and was approved by FHWA on 12/22/2020. Modification #2 was a cost increase to the Hermitage Project. Modification #3 was a cost increase to the PA 18 Birchwood-Rutledge Project. Modification #4 was a cost increase to the State Street Pedestrian Improvements in the random wave phase. Modification #5 was a cost increase to the US 62 State Street Intersection Project. There being no questions, it was noted that a copy is attached to and made a part of the permanent record of Minutes.

APPROVAL OF PROPOSED FUNCTIONAL CLASS & NATIONAL HIGHWAY SYSTEM CHANGES

Mr. Stewart introduced Ashley Tracy and noted her team at McCormick Taylor have been working very closely with MPO staff (Brian and Matt) as well as PennDOT to come up with logical updates to our highway, Functional Classification and National Highway System. The MPO organization is taking a full look at all the roadways within Mercer County to make sure that it's logical. The reason this is important is certain roadways are eligible for different kinds of funding since they have different design standards, so this is very important that this is up to speed.

Ms. Tracy noted the project kicked off in August 2020. The guidance that was used to drive a lot of the decision making was from the Highway Functional Classification, Concept, Criteria, and Procedures by Federal Highway 2013 edition. She noted that the process was very data-driven, confirmed with local knowledge. The main data sources used was from PennDOT's Roadway Management System – Administration and Segment Data as well as Urbanized Area Boundaries. Functional Classification is generally based on primarily by the traffic volumes. It also takes into account the roadway connectivity, accessibility, function and then where it fits within the broader network hierarchy.

The Functional Class revisions recommended were upgrading other principle arterials on roadways including US 19, 208, 62. Twenty-one (21) miles were added to the Federal Aid System. The stubs were corrected where a roadway would not appear to connect to the rest of the system. Also, requested ten (10) locally owned roads be added to system based on traffic volumes and functions. Some changes extend into Lawrence County and this effort brought the

Functional Class mileage more in line with FHWA's suggested ranges.

The National Highway System was reviewed using the Statewide and County maps as well as the intermodal facilities. MAP 21 was also reviewed since automatic upgrades occurred around 2012. After a comprehensive review of those, we looked at connectivity, parallel routes and nine (9) different criteria to be added to the NHS. The NHS for PA shows a small segment of US 62 that ended in a stub connection, so we are requesting the US 62 NHS designation be extended to I-79. We are requesting stubs and parallel routes from NHS in Hermitage and West Middlesex. Maintain existing NHS designation on SR 18 and adding 13 miles of US 62 to the system and removing 7 miles from those stops in parallel route, so a net gain in NHS net mileage. The next steps would be to get the MPO acceptance, getting concurrence letters from District 1, then sending that over to central office for final approval and then to FHWA for their review and hope to have these changes approved by summertime. There being no discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Hamill to approve these suggested changes so they can be formal. Mr. Hittle seconded. The motion passed.

PERFORMANCE MEASURE REPORTS AND TARGET ADOPTION

Mr. Coxe stated it is time to review our performance measure targets for safety, condition, and congestion; which we have been doing for the past 2-3 years. Mr. Stewart mentioned as we move toward a more performance based system, there are certain things that we need to assess and we have targets that we need to meet. The reason we are reviewing this with the Coordinating Committee is because there have been some revisions to the targets under PM-1 and PM-3. PM-1 deals with safety and we are looking at the number and rate of fatalities, serious injury and the number of non-motorized accidents that result in a fatality or serious injury. PM-2 is looking at conditions of roadways and bridges and these targets were not adjusted. Some revisions under PM-3 will be to look at travel reliability on the interstate routes and the non-interstate National Highway System routes.

Mr. Hamill questioned why the safety target numbers are going higher than what they actually are? Ms. Kristin Mulkerin mentioned that there was a definition change for serious injuries around the time performance measures started and we are still catching up because these are a 5 year rolling average. After discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Hamill to approve our commitment to meeting these targets, as have been done before. Mr. Helsel seconded. The motion passed.

PROJECT UPDATE SUMMARY

--Transportation Alternatives and STU Project Status Reports - Mr. Stewart gave a few updates on three projects and two of them are TA projects and one STU project. The **Springfield SR 208 Multimodal Path's** engineer, Gateway, has prepared final plans which are out to PennDOT for final review prior to ROW requests. One change was noted that the trail is now broken into phases; no longer goes all the way to municipal building. The **Greenville Alan Avenue Sidewalk Project** is all ready to go. Construction to start after April 18th and a pre-construction meeting took place in January. The **US 62 Gateway Project in the City of Sharon** have WRA, their engineer under contract and have had several meetings and are on schedule to let the project prior to July PS&E deadline.

--2021 Funding and Letting Program – Mr. Tom McClelland mentioned that his old position as design services/engineer was filled by Ron Johnson. Mr. Johnson has been with PennDOT since 2008 and he will be covering the major projects at our MPO meetings and he will continue with the newsletters. If anyone would like to receive the monthly newsletter, to please let Matt Stewart or PennDOT know so we can email or mail you one.

Mr. McClelland shared a construction program, which is something a little different due to funding issues. To date, we have bid three projects. The first is a big I-80 paving project in Venango County, which will cost 6 to 8 million of the 9 million dollars. As far as the rest of the year, we are going to let 64 projects for around \$150 million. He mentioned that they are looking at different things, such as fuel tax, since it isn't going as far as it used to due to the increase in electric vehicles. Currently, we have a system that is based on fuel tax and the fuel efficiency is increasing, which is

not a sustainable future, so we have to figure out a way to do that. One of the ways is a program called PA Pathways.

The second and third construction projects are a bridge project and another paving project. Projects left to be advertised are the Springfield Church Road Bridge Replacement Precast Box Culvert, which we are hoping to do that later this spring. The Mill Street Bridge project will need a rehab on the deck replacement, mill, pave, remove existing deck/barriers, waterproofing, drainage, the 1" PPC overlay and guiderails. Next is a paving project from SR258 in Mercer to SR 18 in Clark (10.55 miles) and SR 3015 from SR 718 Sieg Hill Road to SR 418 in Wheatland (3.88 miles). Next is a paving project on SR 19 Perry Highway from New Castle Road to Quince Street in Mercer Borough which includes a new bridge near the car dealership and replacing a box culvert. The Blacktown Road Bridge over I-79 in Springfield Township will have a new deck replaced and applying the waterproofing as well. We will be doing rehab on a couple of other bridges on I-79 where we hydro demo (use water to blast off the old deteriorated concrete). Next, we are working on obtaining right-of-ways from property owners and businesses for the Pedestrian Safety and Mobility Improvement Project (sidewalks) on State Street from SR 18 to Buhl Farm Drive, north and south. Next, is the removal of the Ohl Street Bridge in Greenville Borough over the Shenango River, which is deemed redundant.

PennDOT also focuses on bicycle and pedestrian paths to improve quality of life for individuals. First is the construction of a multimodal trail (Phase 2) connecting to the Springfield Township Municipal Building and entrance to Grove City Airport. Just north of Greenville, Werner Road by Werner Ladder we are looking at a bridge rehabilitation project by removing and replacing the concrete deck. Construction to take place in 2022. He mentioned that we just completed a safety study along I-80. The next phase will be the installation of a couple DMS (Dynamic Message Signs) boards and CCTV's (Closed Circuit TV cameras) in certain areas along I-80 and we applied for and were able to receive ITS monies, so this project would not come out of the TIP funds.

Next, he mentioned some District Wide Contracts. The first contract will be for highway lighting which maintains them for 2 years and it is an on call basis. Another contract will be for All Weather Pavement Markings for installation, repair and/or replacement. Next, is a District Wide Drilling (core boring, geotechnical investigations and miscellaneous constructions), also it is an on call basis. Last, is the Guiderail Upgrade along I-80, 79, 90 and 376. Guiderail standards change quite frequently and safety improvements would be for replacement and installation of MASH compliant guiderail end sections to meet the new standards. Mr. Stewart mentioned a potential change to the ITS project on I-80. Mr. McClelland noted that we had two cameras pretty close together around mile marker 10 and 11. PennDOT decided to move one of the cameras to another section along I-80. So traveling coming in from Ohio near the rest area is where the second camera will be installed.

MPO COMMITTEE AND STAKEHOLDER CONTACT LISTS/ORGANIZATION PROJECT

Mr. Stewart mentioned that we are asking everybody, whether you're a voting member or a stakeholder to review and update the contact list provided in your meeting packet to ensure that the right people, organizations and governmental jurisdictions are part of the planning process. This is an initial step toward assessing where we are as an MPO so that the work we do can continue to evolve.

LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN UPDATE

Ms. Ashley Tracy from McCormick Taylor gave a quick overview of the schedule for the project. The Long Range Plan kicked off in December 2020 and are currently working through the public involvement plan, getting ready to launch a public survey and do some focus group interviews. During the summer, we will be looking at developing some new projects for the LRP listing. Currently, they are prioritizing criteria from last time and are preparing to have the report by August with a 30-day public comment period in October, with final acceptance and approval at the November MPO meeting. Ms. Carrie Machuga stated that we are going to start our initial public outreach for the LRP. Our first survey will be a 30-day public survey period, which will take us into mid-March. Throughout March, we will start our stakeholder focus groups. We will have 6 targeted meetings with a variety of audiences to get as much

feedback and input as possible. In April, we will have a Steering Committee meeting to recap all of the input that we collected from the stakeholders and the public. McCormick Taylor then will incorporate all of that into the actual plan document, which a draft copy will be available by the fall.

US 62 TUNNEL STUDY

Mr. Stewart mentioned that this initial study was finalized in December and essentially what we had was five alternatives that we ended up with, in addition to kind of, a no build, no action alternative which would be put on the railroad, which currently owns the tunnel, to install a new rigid liner. The visual representations of the five alternatives were shown on the screen. Alternative one would just involve changing the actual tunnel, making it a board box tunnel and does not make any changes to the roadway alignment. The second alternative makes a slight change to the curve radius, softens the curve a little bit, but it still does not meet design criteria. Actually, this is a fairly expensive option, because the tunnel would need to be oversized because there is a curve going into it. The third alternative is changing the location of the tunnel, about 50' north, and making the curve a little broader. Then the intersection with Junction Road comes in more of a T, which might be the best alternative and this is fairly inexpensive and is less expensive than alternative two. Alternative four is taking away the curves and constructing the tunnel significantly to the north, which impacts a lot of properties, including a loss of one home. This alternative is a bit more expensive than option three. Alternative five looked at following the alignment of alternative four but making and at grade crossing. Alternative five is the most expensive and has obvious disadvantages because you are creating a new railroad crossing, the railroad would require that another crossing is closed. Mr. McClelland stated the big challenge with the five alternatives is they start at \$10 or \$11 million. This is a very expensive project, so moving forward is difficult. He noted that what's nice about Alternative 3 or 4 is constructability, keeping the tunnel open while you build something new with just some tie-ins. These are probably the ones that are more palatable to append data as well. He noted that if you are going to spend that kind of money, you want to do it right the first time.

FEDERAL CERTIFICATION REVIEW – SUMMARY OF FINAL REPORT

Mr. Gene Porochniak from FHWA noted that he and the rest of the federal review team have written and finalized their report relating to the MPO's certification review, which took place last year. FHWA and FTA are required to review and certify the planning process within TMAs every four years to determine how they are following federal laws and regulations. Transportation Management Areas (TMAs) are metropolitan areas with a population of 200,000 or more. Back in 2000, the census merged the Youngstown, OH and the Sharon, PA-OH urbanized areas into a single bi-state TMA. Shenango Valley represents the PA portion of the designated OH-PA TMA. Last spring, the MPO submitted material for a desk review and a virtual on-site review took place in June 2020. An online public survey was held to gather feedback on the planning process in the region. A report was developed, reviewed and jointly approved by FHWA and FTA on January 13, 2021. The issuance of this approval letter officially recertifies this region for another four year period. The next certification review will most likely take place during the spring and summer of 2024.

The summary of findings found that the transportation process in the Shenango Valley substantially meets the Federal requirements. FHWA and FTA jointly certified the transportation planning process on January 13, 2021 with 17 commendations; 5 recommendations and no corrective actions. The fact that there are no corrective actions really speaks to the Shenango Valley's strong planning process in the region. The next steps are to meet with the MPO staff to prioritize recommendations and the MPO can integrate recommendations into the work program tasks. FHWA and PennDOT will provide technical assistance as needed.

TRANSPORTATION FUNDING UPDATE/COVID RELIEF FUNDING

Mr. Kevin McCullough mentioned as far as transportation funding goes right now, we are in a one year extension on the Fast Act, which is the authorization bill we are currently working under. There were some general fund transfers in order to keep the account solvent, as far as the highway trust fund goes in order to keep us going through September

2021 and hopefully we have a new authorization bill at that time also. In December 2020 there was a COVID Relief fund passed and signed into law which includes \$407 million in relief funding. This is not stimulus funding, but COVID relief funding to help transportation departments and the Commonwealth of PA to provide a funding source that is very flexible.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Hamill to adjourn the meeting at 12:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel M. Gracenin,
MPO Secretary

DMG/ew