



*Lackawanna/Luzerne Transportation Study  
Metropolitan Planning Organization*

*www.lltsmpo.com*

**FINAL MINUTES OF THE  
LACKAWANNA-LUZERNE TRANSPORTATION STUDY  
PUBLIC MEETING OF THE COMBINED TECHNICAL  
AND COORDINATING COMMITTEES  
Oct. 2, 2019**

Following are the final minutes of the Lackawanna-Luzerne Transportation Study (LLTS) public meeting of the Combined Technical and Coordinating Committees, held 10:00 AM on Oct. 2, 2019 at the Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce, Hayden Tower, 8 W. Broad Street, Hazleton, Pennsylvania. These minutes were amended and adopted by the Committees on Jan. 8, 2020.

The LLTS Combined Technical and Coordinating Committees meeting was held on Wednesday, Oct. 2, 2019 at the Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce in Hazleton, PA.

Mr. Pitoniak, Chairman of the Technical Committee, stated for the record that he did advertise that the Technical and Coordinating Committees would meet in a combined session today at the Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce in accordance with the provisions of the Sunshine Law and Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act.

A letter was recently received from Mr. Roberts stating that Ms. Mulkerin would serve as PennDOT Central Office's voting member on the Coordinating Committee beginning today until further notice.

Proxy representatives noted to be in attendance included:

(for the Coordinating Committee):

- Heath Eddy for David Pedri, Member from Luzerne County, Coordinating Committee Chair
- Alan Wufsus for Jeffrey Cusat, Member from City of Hazleton
- John Pocius for Wayne Evans, Member from City of Scranton
- Butch Frati for Anthony George, Member from City of Wilkes-Barre
- Kathy Bednarek for Lee Horton, Luzerne Transit Member

(for the Technical Committee):

- Marie Bishop, for Gerard Babinski, PennDOT District 4-0 Bridge Engineer Member
- Kathy Bednarek for Lee Horton, Luzerne Transit Member
- Butch Frati for Anthony George, Member from City of Wilkes-Barre
- John Pocius for Wayne Evans, Member from City of Scranton
- Ralph Sharp for Jeffrey Cusat, Hazleton City Transit Member
- Alan Baranski for Jeff Box, Northeast Pennsylvania Alliance (NEPA) Member

A full list of committee members and proxies is appended to these minutes.

Mr. Pitoniak welcomed everyone, and asked for self-introductions.

### **ADDITION TO THE AGENDA: DISCUSSION ON BRIDGE PRIORITIES**

Mr. Pitoniak stated we would deviate from the agenda to accommodate discussions with Mr. Grochocki (regarding the West Nanticoke Bridge) and (later) representatives from the Borough of Duryea (regarding the intersection of York and Foote Avenues). He invited Mr. Grochocki of State Senator John Yudichak's staff to speak.

Mr. Grochocki said he had recently met with Ms. Hazelton to discuss Sen. Yudichak's interest in advancing the repair or replacement of the West Nanticoke Bridge as a key priority within the Transportation Improvement Project (TIP) process. Plymouth's fire company was recently

decertified, and Plymouth is relying on Nanticoke for firefighting coverage. Mr. Grochocki acknowledged that two bridges in Pittston might be ahead of the West Nanticoke Bridge in the pipeline of projects, but Sen. Yudichak wants to see the West Nanticoke Bridge raised as a priority.

Mr. Pitoniak asked if there were cost estimates prepared for repair or replacement of the bridge. Mr. Eddy said that a rough estimate of \$17 Million was prepared by the Luzerne County Engineering Department. Ms. Hazelton said that estimate might only cover repair of 3 truss spans, and may not be comprehensive.

After a discussion, it was agreed that \$40 Million might be a more reasonable estimate for full bridge replacement.

Mr. Frati said he believed the West Nanticoke Bridge should be prioritized because of the long detours that can result.

Mr. Pitoniak said the West Nanticoke Bridge has not yet appeared as an item on the Lackawanna-Luzerne Long Range Transportation Plan. He asked how structurally deficient it might be. Ms. Hazelton said it was not yet determined to be structurally deficient, but Luzerne County was undertaking a closer inspection, and the bridge might be downgraded as a result.

Mr. Pitoniak said that the Lackawanna-Luzerne Long Range Transportation Plan and the Lackawanna-Luzerne Regional Plan will be updated in the next year. He said the West Nanticoke Bridge could be added to the TIP after the Long Range Plan and Twelve Year Plan and associated environmental reviews, etc, are completed. The process takes time. He also noted that overall TIP funding has been going down. These are the constraints we are operating under.

Mr. Grochocki said it was Sen. Yudichak's interest to address the West Nanticoke Bridge as soon as possible. Considering there are two Pittston bridges in the TIP process, he asked whether that number could be lowered to one to make way for the West Nanticoke Bridge. This idea was recently raised with the mayor of Pittston, and he seemed open to converting one of the two bridges into a pedestrian bridge. Mr. Pitoniak acknowledged all this might be possible.

Ms. Hazelton said it was her feeling that the estimate for ensuring a sound West Nanticoke Bridge was rushed and not comprehensive. She suggested Luzerne County revisit the cost estimate and take time to reach a more carefully-calculated figure.

Mr. Roberts noted that County funds might be available to help support the project.

### **ITEM #1 – PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Pitoniak entertained the opportunity for public comment. There was none.

**ITEM #2A – APPROVAL OF THE JULY TECHNICAL AND COORDINATING  
COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

Copies of the July 17, 2019 meeting minutes were sent out to all members. Mr. Pitoniak asked if there were any edit suggestions. Hearing none, motions were entertained for adoption of the minutes by the Technical Committee. The minutes were adopted on a motion by Mr. Pocius and seconded by Ms. Hazelton, carrying. Mr. Fiume, Vice-Chair of the Coordinating Committee, entertained a motion. The minutes were adopted on behalf of the Coordinating Committee on a motion made by Mr. Wufsus and seconded by Mr. Roman, and carried.

**ITEM #2B – 2019-2022 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP)**

**Current TIP Actions**

Copies of the 2019-2022 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) modifications were sent out to all committee members. Mr. Fisher highlighted some of the TIP modifications which involve moving funding due to cost shifts, projects schedules, etc.

The complete list of TIP modifications is posted here:

<http://www.lltsmpo.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Current-TIP-actions-1.pdf>

Mr. Fisher noted that the TIP changes were modifications not amendments and would not require a vote.

**Amendment**

Copies of the amendment involving funding changes for the County of Lackawanna Transit System (COLTS) were also distributed. This amendment had recently been passed by telephone ballot. To confirm adoption of this amendment, Mr. Pitoniak asked for a motion, which was made by Mr. Frati on behalf of the Technical Committee, and seconded, and carried. Mr. Fiume asked for a motion, which was made by Mr. Pocius on behalf of the Coordinating Committee, and seconded, and carried.

**ITEM #2C – HILLSIDE ROAD OVER TOBY’S CREEK, KINGSTON TOWNSHIP:  
\$5.00 FEE INITIATIVE**

Mr. Roberts mentioned that the Luzerne County Council adopted a \$5.00 motor vehicle registration fee. A portion of these funds will be used to maintain Hillside Road where it crosses Toby’s Creek in Kingston Township. Mr. Roberts mentioned that this project involves \$2 million in PennDOT Central Office funds. Mr. Eddy said he was pleased with the success of this project. Mr. Pitoniak mentioned that a similar initiative was attempted in Lackawanna County, but did not garner support. A motion was made by Mr. Eddy on behalf of the Coordinating Committee to adopt this project, seconded by Mr. Wufsus, and carried.

### **ITEM #3A – FALL PROJECT COMMENCEMENT**

Mr. Petrini briefed the group on the sole project with a let date occurring between the beginning of October and the end of December:

- MPMS 8434 SR 3034 over Nescopek Creek Bridge Replacement in Luzerne County

He asked if there were any questions or comments. Hearing none, the committees moved forward to the next discussion item.

### **ITEM #3B – FALL PLANNING PARTNERS**

Mr. Roberts mentioned that the Fall Planning Partners meeting would be occurring later in the month- Oct. 15-17 in State College. This is an opportunity for federal, State, and county-level government officials to discuss the latest in planning and budgeting for transportation infrastructure maintenance and improvement projects throughout Pennsylvania.

Mr. Pitoniak said he expected to receive the latest in financial guidance at the meeting, and would report back this information at the next LLTS committees meeting.

### **ITEM #3C – FHWA CERTIFICATION REVIEW ACTION PLAN**

Mr. Chapman noted that MPO staff were undertaking activities to improve performance of the LLTS as a result of recommendations coming out of the last Certification Review from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

One of the items to be completed is updating the agreement establishing the LLTS MPO. Mr. Pitoniak said this will be a major undertaking as the agreement and bylaws date to the early 1960s and reference predecessor agencies that no longer exist.

Other activities include the performance of roadway safety audits; succession planning; and improving communications with the public through PennDOT Connects.

Working with PennDOT officials from District 4-0 and the Central Office, LLTS staff undertook several roadway safety audits over the course of two days. Details of these audits, including a slideshow, will be discussed later in the agenda. LLTS staff are preparing a report to recap findings from the audits.

Mr. Roberts said he was pleased with the good work being undertaken.

Mr. Smoker said he appreciates the work— and he sees progress being made.

### **ITEM #3D – GENERAL PROCEDURAL GUIDANCE EFFECTS ON LLTS**

Mr. Pitoniak noted that FHWA has indicated they will want more time to review our next Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) before approving it. The UPWP constitutes the statement of work LLTS will be engaging in as an MPO in collaboration with PennDOT. A shared goal of LLTS staff and FHWA officials is to streamline our next UPWP and make it more realistic in capturing the work we intend to perform. Mr. Pitoniak noted that we've lost \$11,500 in next year's UPWP budget. TIP funding is projected to go down.

It was mentioned that no further CMAQ funding would be coming for the foreseeable future. Mr. Smoker said the next round of air quality conformity determination work for the Federal Fiscal Years (FFY) 2021-2024 TIP will merely involve re-iterating that LLTS meets clean air attainment goals, and producing an air quality conformity determination report; however, no additional computer modeling will be necessary.

Mr. Chapman said a November draft of the new UPWP was forthcoming— with a target adoption date set by FHWA for January.

### **ITEM #3E – ROADWAY SAFETY AUDITS**

Mr. Chapman and Mr. Jones presented a slideshow highlighting the 7 roadway safety audits that were conducted across both counties over the course of two days. The slideshow highlighted safety issues at these intersections; the recent accident history PennDOT had compiled on the subject sites; and recommendations the team had arrived at for improving safety at these locations.

Mr. Smoker lauded PennDOT District 4-0 for the preparatory work they had undertaken in advance of the audits. He suggested that LLTS consider performing roadway safety audits every time the MPO is about to update its Long Range Plan. Mr. Pitoniak went further and recommended we undertake safety audits every year in advance of the TIP updates.

### **ITEM #3F – TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVE (TA) SET-ASIDES**

Mr. Chapman noted that in 2017-2018, we allocated TA set-aside funds for Luzerne County Transportation Authority (LCTA) and various trail group projects (way-finding signage). We are looking to see if a new round of this funding might become available.

### **ITEM #4A – SCRANTON AND WILKES-BARRE BICYCLE/ PEDESTRIAN NETWORKS PLAN**

Mr. Pitoniak said a recent meeting had been held with the consultant, Barry Isett & Associates, to discuss the developing Scranton/Wilkes-Barre Downtowns Bicycle/Pedestrian Study. He also reminded members that Wayne Evans (former Councilman; now Mayor) had given an update

during the last MPO committees meeting in July on the separate effort underway by the City of Scranton to study the issue of walkability in the city. There is a desire to coordinate and compliment efforts.

Mr. Pitoniak mentioned that another meeting on the downtowns study will occur next week (on Oct. 8), and another to occur in November. The aim is to wrap up the study next year.

Mr. Petrini mentioned that one challenge has been finding a way to cross River Street to get into downtown Wilkes-Barre.

Mr. Pitoniak noted that drivers are unable to circle Courthouse Square in downtown Scranton because of the one-way street network. Recommendations might include reverting the direction of Linden and Spruce Streets to change this.

#### **ITEM #4B – PENNDOT CONNECTS UPDATE**

Mr. Fisher provided an update on the PennDOT Connects informational and interactive public outreach initiative. He thanked Ms. Bednarek for keeping PennDOT apprised of LCTA's projects. He also thanked Mr. Wufsus for helping PennDOT coordinate a recent meeting in Hazleton.

PennDOT wishes to keep the public updated on development of the Long Range Plan and other projects on the horizon, Mr. Fisher said.

Mr. Wufsus thanked Mr. Fisher, and said the PennDOT Connects effort is worthwhile.

Mr. Pitoniak said PennDOT Connects gives municipalities and the public a voice-- a means of exchanging information with the State. He said he is excited about what the program will bring to Lackawanna County.

#### **ITEM #4C – FUNCTIONAL CLASS UPDATE**

Mr. Chapman explained that there are approximately 20 locations left within Luzerne County where traffic counts will need to be collected. Staff from both counties recently cooperated to collect data at the traffic circles near the airport in Avoca.

Mr. Jones explained that all traffic-count data needed for Lackawanna County has been collected. The final format for presenting the data will comprise a pair of before-and-after maps illustrating the functional classifications (minor, arterial, etc) of the various roadways throughout the bi-county region, with an accompanying narrative.

Mr. Pitoniak said the effort will be coordinated with neighboring counties to be sure a road's classification doesn't change just because it crosses a county border. The traffic-count data is meant to inform consistency in the classifications.

Mr. Chapman explained that right now, the data is considered ADT (average daily traffic). Staff plans to work with Greg Dunmire to convert the data to AADT (annual average daily traffic) using PennDOT methodology.

#### **ITEM #4D – SCRANTON TO HOBOKEN RAIL RESUMPTION**

Mr. Pitoniak said a successful meeting was recently held with many of the principal elected leaders on the federal, state, and municipal levels from Pennsylvania and New Jersey to discuss resumption of passenger rail service between Scranton and Hoboken.

Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties each recently secured \$200,000 in grants to do engineering studies in support of this goal. Some ARC (Appalachian Regional Coalition) funding was also secured, and is being used to look at the structural integrity of the piers of the Delaware Viaduct.

The next phase of the project is to be able to apply for New Starts funding.

#### **ITEM #4E – FINANCIAL GUIDANCE AND UPCOMING TIP SCHEDULE**

Mr. Roberts said PennDOT would like to see each MPO, including LLTS, develop its own unique schedule for TIP updates.

Mr. Petrini said a draft schedule had recently been developed for LLTS in response to PennDOT's expressed interest in this. Mr. Petrini displayed the draft schedule, and touched on some of its highlights.

#### **ITEM #4F – UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM (UPWP) UPDATE**

Mr. Pitoniak re-iterated that the UPWP was being updated. This document is the scope of work to be conducted by LLTS over the next two years. Mr. Petrini explained that MPO staff held a recent meeting with PennDOT where it was agreed we would narrow the list of tasks in the document down to a more reasonable number. After much discussion, the list was narrowed down to approximately three (3) key tasks and approximately 21 subtasks. Staff plans to issue a draft of the document within a few weeks to have it reviewed and approved by January.

Mr. Chapman said if committee members wanted a task to be considered for addition to the document, then please notify staff.

Mr. Fisher said he thinks the process is going well.

#### **ITEM #4G – LONG RANGE PLAN AND COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE**

Mr. Pitoniak explained that an effort was underway to update both the Long Range Transportation Plan and the Regional (Comprehensive) Plan together. The target date for completion is Feb. 2021.

Mr. Eddy said a Request for Proposals (RFP) for consultant services has been posted on both the Luzerne Purchasing Department and LLTS MPO websites. Three (3) proposals were received from the following firms:

- Environmental Planning and Design (EPD) of Pittsburgh and McMahon
- Gannett Fleming et al
- Michael Baker

The plan is to have staff review these proposals in the coming days, and check them against a scoring matrix. One or more teams might be invited to interview. Then, a contract may be negotiated. The aim is to hire a consultant to work on the study by January.

Mr. Pitoniak said he was surprised McCormack Taylor (a consultant for past projects) did not make a bid.

#### **ITEM #4H – COMPLETE STREETS POLICY**

It was noted that Ms. Bednarek has been working to draft a Complete Streets policy. Mr. Pitoniak said the plan was to circulate the policy at the next MPO meeting in January so it can be considered for adoption.

#### **ITEM #5A – DURYEY BOROUGH**

The agenda jumped to Item 5A. Representatives from the Borough of Duryea had intended to attend the day's meeting to discuss the intersection of York and Foote Avenues, but they did not attend the meeting.

#### **ADDITION TO THE AGENDA: CASEY HIGHWAY SOUND WALLS**

Mr. Pitoniak said that leaders with the Borough of Jessup had recently expressed interest in seeing sound walls be installed along the Casey Highway. Mr. Pitoniak and Ms. Bishop met with Borough officials to discuss the matter. They explained that projected noise levels had already been studied. The upshot of the study was that sound walls did not merit being included as part of the highway's construction. The Borough would have to conduct its own sound study (these are expensive), the results of which may or may not justify the need for walls. Mr. Pitoniak also noted that the Casey Highway is designated as a scenic byway, and sound walls are

not allowed along scenic byways. Some individuals believe that the location of the highway, nestled between two ridgelines, would render sound walls ineffectual as any traffic noise would bounce off the ridgelines, over the sound walls, and back into the valley. Areas of steep slopes might also make the construction of sound walls a challenging and expensive enterprise. Mr. Pitoniak acknowledged that additional warehousing and truck traffic has come – and is projected to continue to come – to the area in question. However, he theorizes it probably still will not be enough to merit the erection of sound walls.

#### **ITEM #4I – UPCOMING MPO MEETING**

It was noted that the next MPO meeting would involve the combined Coordinating and Technical Committees, and is scheduled to occur on Wednesday, Jan. 8 (location to be determined).

With no further business before the group, the meeting adjourned.

LACKAWANNA-LUZERNE TRANSPORTATION  
STUDY MEETING - COORDINATING COMMITTEE  
Oct. 2, 2019

<u>COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEMBERS</u>	<u>MEMBER PRESENT</u>	<u>ABSENT &amp; NO PROXY</u>	<u>PROXY PRESENT</u>
<u>PENNDOT</u>			
Richard N. Roman, District 4-0 Office	X		
Kristin Mulkerin, Central Office	X		
<u>LACKAWANNA COUNTY</u>			
George Kelly		X	
Patrick O'Malley, Commissioner		X	
<u>LUZERNE COUNTY</u>			
C. David Pedri, County Manager, Committee Chair – (Heath Eddy, Executive Director of Planning & Zoning – Permanent Proxy)			X
<u>CITY OF HAZLETON</u>			
Jeffrey L. Cusat, Mayor - (Alan Wufsus, Hazleton City Engineering Technician – Permanent Proxy)			X
<u>CITY OF SCRANTON</u>			
Wayne Evans, Mayor – (John Pocius, LaBella Associates – Permanent Proxy)			X
<u>CITY OF WILKES-BARRE</u>			
Anthony George, Mayor – (Attilio “Butch” Frati, Director of Operations – Permanent Proxy)			X
<u>TRANSIT REPRESENTATIVE – LACKAWANNA COUNTY</u>			
Robert Fiume, COLTS Director, Committee Vice-Chair	X		

TRANSIT REPRESENTATIVE – LUZERNE COUNTY

Lee Horton, LCTA Interim Executive Director – (Kathy Bednarek, LCTA Grants Coordinator – Permanent Proxy) X

AVIATION REPRESENTATIVE

Carl Beardsley, Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport Director X

\*PA NORTHEAST REGIONAL RAILROAD AUTHORITY

Larry Malski, President X

\*FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

Matthew Smoker, Transportation Planning Program Manager X

\*FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION (FTA)

Timothy Lidiak, Project Manager X

\*FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

Lori Pagnanelli, District Office Manager X

\*SENATOR BLAKE’S OFFICE (LACKAWANNA)

Larry West, Regional Director X

\*Non-Voting Members

LLTS Technical Committee Members Present:

Steve Pitoniak, Lackawanna County Regional Planning Commission, Committee Chair

Susan Hazelton, PennDOT District 4-0 Assistant Executive for Design

Dean Roberts, PennDOT Central Office, Committee Vice-Chair

Marie Bishop, Proxy for PennDOT District 4-0 Bridge Engineer Gerard Babinski

Kathy Bednarek, Proxy for Luzerne County Transit Representative, Lee Horton, LCTA

Heath Eddy, Luzerne County Planning Commission

John Petrini, Luzerne County

Chris Chapman, Luzerne County

Attilio “Butch” Frati, Proxy for Wilkes-Barre City Mayor, Anthony George

John Pocius, Proxy for Scranton City Mayor, Wayne Evans

Ralph Sharp, Proxy for Hazleton City Transit Representative, Mayor Jeffrey L. Cusat

Alan Baranski, Proxy for Northeast Pennsylvania Alliance (NEPA) Member, Jeff Box

Stephen Mykulyn, Lackawanna Aviation Representative

Carl Beardsley, Luzerne Aviation Representative

\*Matthew Smoker, Federal Highway Administration

\*Non-Voting Members

LLTS Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) Members Present:

Stephanie Milewski, North Pocono Trails Association

Aaron Whitney, Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce

Non-Members Present:

Matthew Jones, Lackawanna County Planning

Justin Pekarovsky, Lackawanna County Planning

Steve Fisher, PennDOT District 4-0 Planning and Programming

John Frankosky, PennDOT District 4-0 Planning and Programming

Steve Wilver, Larson Design Group

Gregg Pavlick, Barry Isett & Associates