

Lackawanna/Luzerne MPO

Transportation Study

Technical and Coordinating Committee Meeting

July 6th, 2022
Minutes

At 1:17pm, Dean Roberts opened the meeting.

Mr. Roberts noted that, per the Sunshine Act requirements, the meeting and agenda were advertised in the Scranton Times, Citizens Voice, and Hazleton Standard Speaker and the meeting time and agenda were posted on the LLTS MPO website more than 24 hours prior to the meeting.

Chris Chapman then conducted roll call for Coordinating Committee, Technical Committee, TAC Committee and non-members present.

1. Public Comment

Discussion of items not on the agenda. No public comment was offered.

2. Action Items

2a/b. The 2023-2026 Conformity Determination/Air Quality Resolution

Mr. Roberts noted that the LLTS MPO is considered an attainment (maintenance) area for air quality under the EPA's 1997 National Ambient Air Quality Standards, and that the MPO must meet conformity requirements to continue with the attainment area designation. He added that the Air Quality Resolution states that the MPO and its partners will consider air quality while developing plans and programs.

Mr. Roberts asked for a motion from the Technical Committee to approve the 2023-2026 Conformity Determination and Air Quality Resolution. Matt Jones moved to approve, seconded by Sue Hazleton. The motion carried.

Robert Fiume asked for a motion from the Coordinating Committee to approve the 2023-2026 Conformity Determination and Air Quality Resolution. Butch Frati moved to approve, seconded by Rich Roman. The motion carried.

[Conformity Determination](#), [Air Quality Conformity Resolution](#)

2c. The MOU for the 2023-2026 TIP

Mr. Roberts explained that the Memorandum of Understanding for the 2023-2026 TIP is an agreement between the MPO, PennDOT, and the local transit agencies establishing the procedures to adjust, modify, or amend the TIP.

[MOU](#)

2d. The Self-Certification Resolution

Mr. Roberts said that the Self-Certification Resolution is a statement testifying that the MPO is following the standard of 23 CFR and other federal rules and regulations to the organization's best ability.

[Self-Certification](#)

2e. The 2023-2026 TIP

Mr. Roberts stated that Mr. Chapman had done an excellent review of the TIP and its update process during his presentation in the TIP public comment period preceding the meeting, and reiterated that the TIP is a four-year-plan for upcoming projects that is updated by the MPO every two years.

Mr. Roberts asked for a motion from the Technical Committee to approve the 2023-2026 MOU, Self-Certification Resolution, and the 2023-2026 TIP. Ms. Hazleton moved to approve, seconded by Mr. Chapman. The motion carried.

Mr. Fiume asked for a motion from the Coordinating Committee to approve the 2023-2026 MOU, Self-Certification Resolution, and the 2023-2026 TIP. Brenda Sacco moved to approve, seconded by Richard Roman. The motion carried.

Mr. Chapman noted that the new TIP would go into effect on Oct. 1st, after further documentation was submitted to PennDOT and FHWA.

[2023-2026 TIP](#)

2f. Approval of the April 20th, 2022 Combined Technical and Coordinating Committee Meeting Minutes

Mr. Roberts asked for a motion from the Technical Committee to approve the Apr. 20th meeting minutes. Barbara Idhaw moved to approve, seconded by Mary Liz Donato. The motion carried.

Mr. Fiume asked for a motion from the Coordinating Committee to approve the Apr. 20th meeting minutes. Butch Frati moved to approve, seconded by Randy Robertson. The motion carried.

[April 20th Meeting Minutes](#)

2g. Current TIP and Actions

Steve Fisher stated the TIP and Actions were distributed prior to the meeting and highlighted the following projects:

- PE phase for SR 2004 over White Oak Run
- PE phase for SR 347 over the Lackawanna River
- PE phase for SR 3015 over the Lackawanna River
- PE phase for SR 115 pipe replacement in Luzerne County
- ROW phase for N. Main Avenue Bridge
- ROW phase for SR 3011, Keyser Ave wall replacement
- ROW phase for SR 6006 over Leggetts Creek
- ROW phase for SR 4037 over Beach Haven
- Construction phase for SR 347 over Hull Creek Bridge

- Construction phase for SR 347 over Leggetts Creek
- Construction phase for SR 309 over Bridge Wapwallopen Creek
- Construction phase for SR 4037 over Beach Haven

(The above projects are listed for information purposes only.)

Mr Fisher added that one project, SR 347 over the Lackawanna River in Olyphant, required an amendment to change from 100% state funding to 100% federal funding for the PE phase. He noted that it is a preservation project that will utilize federal money in FY 2022-2023.

Mr. Roberts asked for a motion from the Technical Committee to approve the amendment to the TIP. Mr. Jones moved to approve, seconded by Ms. Hazleton. The motion carried.

Randy Robertson from the Coordinating Committee asked for clarification on the need for the amendment. Mr. Fisher explained that because no phase of the project had previously had federal funding attached, the proposed change required an amendment, whereas if federal funding had already been designated for any phase the proposed change would only be considered an administrative action and wouldn't need to be voted on.

Mr. Fiume asked for a motion from the Coordinating Committee to approve the amendment to the TIP. Mr. Roman moved to approve, seconded by Mr. Robertson. The motion carried.

[Current TIP](#) and [Actions](#)

3. Discussion Items

3a. IIJA/BIL

Mr. Roman said that there were few updates since the April meeting. He added that District 4-0 is bidding on \$260 million in projects this year, driven by a \$30 million bid on the Casey Highway, and that the district will continue to apply for federal money for various projects in the coming years.

Mr. Robertson asked about the timeline for executing a project after receiving funding, and if there is a penalty for missing deadlines. Mr. Roman answered that each round of applications has a date by which funding must be obligated, with project completion within a given window. He said that, for that reason, the district considers factors such as environmental or right-of-way concerns that could slow the project before applying.

Mr. Roberston then asked if there were penalties for failing to meet a deadline, or if there is a monitoring agency that could withdraw funding in such a case. Mr. Roman said that while there are no specific penalties for missing deadlines, PennDOT is adding staff to monitor projects to ensure timely spending. He added that the FHWA also monitors projects.

Matt Smoker explained that once a project has been awarded federal funding, the FHWA establishes a grant agreement containing timelines for execution and that if the timelines are not met, the funding would be withdrawn for use in other grants.

Mr. Smoker shared a US DOT website designed to assist applicants with applying for grants, identifying resources, and connecting with funding opportunities through the IIJA/BIL. He also shared the FHWA BIL

website and said that several grant programs are open for applications, such as the Bridge Investment Program, Reconnecting Communities, and Safe Streets for All. [US DOT Navigator website](#) and [FHWA BIL website](#)

3b. PennDOT Pathways

Mr. Roberts said that PennDOT is looking for sustainable alternative funding streams due to the growth in battery-powered vehicles and the potential impact on gas tax revenue. He mentioned a mileage-based system or a flat tax upon purchasing a vehicle.

3c. Microtransit

Kathy Bednarek and Mr. Fiume gave a presentation on microtransit. Mr. Fiume explained microtransit is an on-demand hybrid between fixed-route and shared-ride transit that would utilize various vehicles ranging from vans to small buses. He said that it is a more flexible system than fixed-route buses due to its user-driven scheduling and can fill the gaps in the fixed-route network.

Ms. Bednarek said that LCTA has reached out to Via Transportation, a microtransit software provider and that NEPA Moves had done the same, seeking to expand transit's availability in areas lacking service. She then presented a case study from York, PA, where microtransit had significantly improved passenger wait times compared to fixed-route service.

Ms. Bednarek added that LCTA is working on a Transportation Development Plan to update its service routes and intends to utilize microtransit to supplement the fixed-route system, particularly with regards to the area's industrial parks. She emphasized that, at present, less than 30% of the region's population between 25 and 54 years of age can access the five largest employment centers by transit.

She said that microtransit funding is available at federal and non-federal levels. Mr. Fiume added that once a microtransit program is started, agencies can generally sustain it through partnerships for funding and maintenance.

[Microtransit Presentation](#)

3d. District 4-0 Public Meetings Update

Julianne Lawson demonstrated District 4-0's new online schedule of public meetings and reviewed several upcoming meetings, including meetings for a bridge replacement project for sections 251 and 253 of SR 435 in Elmhurst Township and SR 1014 over SR 309 in Dallas Township. She also spoke about two upcoming projects not yet on the website, the widening of I-81 near Wilkes-Barre, and the reconstruction of the Sans Souci in Hanover Township.

Mr. Robertson asked about the length of I-81 to be widened and how long the project would take. Ms. Lawson said that the project is still in the preliminary engineering stage and likely won't start construction until 2025. She stated that the project will reconstruct the interstate from the top of Nuangola Mt. to the Highland Park exit.

3e. Truck Parking Roundtable

Mr. Chapman gave an overview of the information presented over the three-day parking roundtable by the FHWA and the I-81 Corridor Coalition. He said that representatives from six states shared different

approaches and data, and that while many regions are adding truck parking spaces the demand is growing more quickly. He noted that much of the same data shared during the roundtable would also be included in the upcoming freight study the MPO is participating in.

3f. Fall Planning Partners Meeting

Mr. Chapman said that this year's Planning Partners Meeting will be held in State College on October 18th-20th.

3g. Wilkes-Barre Rail to Philadelphia

Mr. Roman said that he met several months ago with Mayor Brown of Wilkes-Barre. The mayor had asked about conducting a study regarding a rail service line between Wilkes-Barre and Philadelphia. Since that meeting, Mr. Roman has been in contact with both the mayor and with the state's Deputy Secretary for Multimodal Transportation. A meeting regarding the study is tentatively scheduled for early August.

He said that the project would face a number of issues, primarily the proposed Scranton-to-Hoboken line, but also other Amtrak opportunities in the area competing for funding. He also said that a study is just the first step, and that completion of a rail line could take years or longer.

Mr. Roberts asked about the cost of the study. Mr. Roman said that the Wilkes-Barre city council had been approached by a contractor offering to conduct the study for \$100k, while Mr. Roman and the Deputy Secretary expect a sufficient study would cost between \$250k and \$500k.

3h. MPO Staffing Update

Mr. Chapman introduced Jonathan Shaw, the newest member of the Luzerne County Planning Department. Mr. Shaw is a recent graduate from King's College in Wilkes-Barre.

Ms. Donato introduced the members of the Lackawanna County Planning Department who had joined since the start of the year: Robert Kenney, Senior Planner, Jessica Edwards, the Regional Planning Manager, and Eric Middleton, the Transportation Planning Manager.

4. Progress Reports

4a. PennDOT Connects Update

John Petrini said that District 4-0 staff had recently conducted the first in-person PennDOT Connects meeting since the start of the pandemic, a meeting at City Hall in Hazleton. He said that the turnout was good, with representatives from several surrounding municipalities, and that several projects from the TYP were discussed.

Mr. Chapman added that the District 4-0 HOP office had restarted meetings with Luzerne and Lackawanna planning department staff comparing recent HOPs with land development submissions.

4b. Eastern PA Freight Alliance Freight Study

Mr. Chapman explained that the study is a collaboration between five MPOs covering ten counties, and briefly reviewed the selection process for the consultant to conduct the study. Two firms had been interviewed, with

WSP being chosen. The firm is currently finalizing the agreement with the MPOs, and the expected project duration is 18 months.

4c. 2022 LLTS MPO Meeting Schedule

The upcoming meetings will be available with both an in-person and a virtual component. The location is to be determined.

All meetings are at 1:00 PM unless otherwise noted:

- October 5th, 2022

Other Business

Matt Jones asked to receive updates on the Scranton-Hoboken rail line from the Lackawanna Planning Dept. Several others agreed, including Ms. Idhaw of GPI. Ms. Donato said she will update as able.

Mr. Roberts asked for a motion to adjourn from the Technical Committee.

Ms. Hazleton moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Jones. The motion carried.

Mr. Fiume asked for a motion to adjourn from the Coordinating Committee.

Mr. Frati moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Roman. The motion carried.

**LACKAWANNA-LUZERNE TRANSPORTATION
STUDY MEETING
MPO TECHNICAL-COORDINATING COMMITTEES**

July 6th, 2022

| <u>COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEMBERS</u> | <u>MEMBER PRESENT</u> | <u>ABSENT & NO PROXY</u> | <u>PROXY PRESENT</u> |
|--|----------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| <u>PENNDOT</u> | | | |
| Richard N. Roman, District 4-0 Office, Committee Vice-Chair | X | | |
| Kristen Mulkerin, Central Office (Dean Roberts PennDOT Central Office-Proxy) | | | X |
| <u>LACKAWANNA COUNTY</u> | | | |
| <i>Vacant</i> (Board of Commissioners) | | | |
| Brenda N. Sacco, Director of Planning & Economic Development | X | | |
| <u>LUZERNE COUNTY</u> | | | |
| Randy Robertson County Manager (Matthew Jones, Executive Director of Luzerne County Planning & Zoning – Permanent Proxy) | X | | |
| <u>CITY OF HAZLETON</u> | | | |
| Jeffrey L. Cusat, Mayor - (Vacant, Hazleton City Engineering Technician - Permanent Proxy) | | X | |
| <u>CITY OF SCRANTON</u> | | | |
| Paige Cognetti, Mayor - (Tom Reilly Jr., Reilly Associates-Permanent Proxy) | | | X |
| <u>CITY OF WILKES-BARRE</u> | | | |
| George Brown, Mayor - (Attilio "Butch" Frati, Director of Operations - Permanent Proxy) | | | X |
| <u>TRANSIT REPRESENTATIVE - LACKAWANNA COUNTY</u> | | | |
| Tim McGrath, COLTS Director | X | | |

TRANSIT REPRESENTATIVE - LUZERNE COUNTY

Robert Fiume, LCTA Director, Committee Chair X

AVIATION REPRESENTATIVE

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

***PA NORTHEAST REGIONAL RAILROAD
AUTHORITY**

Larry Malski, President X

***FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION**

Matt Smoker, Innovative Finance & Planning Implementation
Manager X

***FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION (FTA)**

Timothy Lidiak, Project Manager X

***FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION**

Lori Pagnanelli, District Office Manager X

*Non-Voting Member

LLTS Technical Committee Members Present:

Dean Roberts,

PennDOT Central Office, Committee Chair

Susan Hazelton,

PennDOT District 4-0 Assistant District Executive for Design, Committee Vice-Chair

Gerard Babinski,

PennDOT District 4-0 District Bridge Engineer

Brenda Sacco,

Lackawanna County, Director of Planning and Economic Development

Barbara Idhaw,

Lackawanna County, Engineering Consultant, Greenman-Pederson, Inc.

Chris Chapman,

Luzerne County, Transportation Planner

Mary Liz Donato,

Lackawanna County Planning Department Manager

Tom Reilly, Jr.,

Proxy for Scranton City Mayor, Paige Cognetti, Engineering Consultant, Reilly Associates

Attilio “Butch” Frati,

Proxy for Wilkes-Barre Mayor, George Brown, Director of Operations

Kathy Bednarek

Luzerne County Transportation Authority, (LCTA) Grants Coordinator

Michael Danchek,

County of Lackawanna Transit System (COLTS)

Alan Baranski,

Permanent Proxy for Jeffrey Box, NEPA Alliance President/CEO

Matt Jones,

Executive Director, Luzerne County Planning and Zoning

Matt Smoker,

FHWA Innovative Finance & Planning Implementation Manager

LLTS Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) Members Present:

Bernie McGurl, Lackawanna River Corridor Association

Denise Corcoran, ARCIL

Aaron Whitney, Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce

Owen Worozbyt, Lackawanna Heritage Valley Association

Patrick Williams, Clarks Summit Resident

Non-Members Present:

Steve Fisher, PennDOT District 4-0
Emma Pugh, PennDOT District 4-0
Julianne Lawson, PennDOT District 4-0
Kate McMahon, NEPA Alliance
John Petrini, PennDOT District 4-0
Michael Grantner, STV
Robert Kenney, Lackawanna County Planning Department
Larry Plesh, Luzerne County Engineer
Jessica Edwards, Lackawanna County Planning Department
Kevin O'Boyle, Mericle
William Stone, Luzerne County Planning & Zoning
Joe Corcoran, Lackawanna Heritage Valley Association
Bill Richards, Senator Yudichak's Office
Jim Brady, STV
Mark Tobin, PennDOT Central Office
Jonathan Shaw, Luzerne County Planning & Zoning