

PENNSYLVANIA STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
BUSINESS MEETING
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA
AUGUST 14, 2024



Please note that these minutes are not intended to capture every comment but to identify critical discussion points and highlights of the STC business meetings.

CALL TO ORDER:

Transportation Secretary Michael Carroll convened the quarterly business meeting of the State Transportation Commission (STC) at 10:02 a.m. on August 14, 2024, in Scranton, PA.

ROLL CALL:

Commissioners Present:

1. Honorable Michael B. Carroll
2. Honorable Sharon Knoll
3. Honorable James Kingsborough
4. Honorable Karen Michael
5. Honorable Marty Flynn, Mr. Justin Gensimore, Alternate Present
6. Honorable Wayne Langerholc, Jr., Mr. Nolan Ritchie, Alternate Present

Commissioners Present on the Phone:

7. Honorable Ed Neilson
8. Honorable Kerry Benninghoff, Mr. Kyle Schaeffer, Alternate Present
9. Honorable Paige Willan

MINUTES:

ON A MOTION by Mr. Neilson, seconded by Ms. Michael, and unanimously approved, the May 15, 2024, STC business meeting minutes were accepted.

CHAIR'S REMARKS:

Secretary Carroll thanked everyone for coming. He noted the difficulty of PennDOT's charge to meet the transportation needs of all thirteen million citizens daily and thanked the multidisciplinary team members for their efforts. He welcomed Ms. Christine Norris as the new deputy secretary of Highway Administration after the retirement of Mr. Michael Rebert.

Secretary Carroll said that PennDOT was tested recently in multiple districts due to the effects of Hurricane Debby, that included the loss of bridges in District 3, but PennDOT will rise to meet those challenges. He mentioned that there were bridge collapses in Lackawanna and Bucks

Counties in the last year, and both roads were reopened in approximately two weeks. He said he is honored to act as Secretary for PennDOT and celebrate our achievements.

Secretary Carroll highlighted several sections of the budget enacted in June. There was an additional decoupling of \$125 million of Motor License Funds from the State Police budget, down to \$250 million from \$500 million, with a goal of zero. The State Police will instead be funded from the general fund. An electric vehicle registration fee bill was signed into law, which will go into effect in 2025 for all electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles. .

Secretary Carroll announced that some PennDOT maintenance trucks will have flashing green lights to help aid in safety.

Secretary Carroll thanked the members of the House and Senate who were in attendance for the coordination between the STC and legislature. He noted that there is more work to do in the fall, with shortfalls in every county for transit funding totaling \$200 million statewide.

2023 12-YEAR TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM:

Deputy Secretary for Planning, Ms. Kristin Mulkerin, gave an update on the 2023 12-Year Program adjustments. For the period of April 27, 2024, to July 26, 2024, there were 1,138 project adjustments - 281 additions, 760 changes, and 97 removals, representing a \$165,137,588 increase.

Ms. Mulkerin highlighted the ABE Airport project in District 5. The addition of the project added \$75 million to the program. The Lehigh Northampton Airport Authority was awarded a federal discretionary grant of \$40 million, that was added to the program along with matching funds.

Ms. Mulkerin also highlighted the SR 115 over I-81 project in Luzerne County, which is a critical interchange improvement. The project was let in June but required a construction cost increase of \$8 million to meet the bid

ON A MOTION by Mr. Kingsborough and seconded by Ms. Michael, the 2023 12-Year Program Adjustments were approved.

2025 12-YEAR TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM:

Deputy Secretary Ms. Kristin Mulkerin presented the 2025 12-Year Transportation Program (TYP).

The TYP is PennDOT's mid-range planning tool, listing the next 12 years of projects. The process begins with the Transportation Performance Report (TPR), which looks at multiple metrics to evaluate PennDOT's performance. PennDOT and the STC host a survey and Online Public Forum to get public input. These factors are taken into consideration when each Metropolitan and Rural Planning Organization (MPOs and RPOs) drafts their Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), each of which goes to a Public Comment Period (PCP) that

occurred between April and June 2024. Those TIPs are then adopted and sent to PennDOT, to be combined into a draft Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The STIP had a PCP between June 18 to July 3, 2024. The final step is STC approval of the draft TYP.

Outreach efforts for the survey included an extended Transportation Survey time, four pop-up events with printed materials, partnering with the PA State Association of Township Supervisors to present at twelve regional meetings, weekly social media posts, print and broadcast media, and notifying previous survey takers via email.

The Online Public Forum was held on April 12, 2023, at 6:30 PM, and was viewable via webinar, call-in audio, and Facebook Live. There were over 3,000 live participants, a record high. The Forum featured presentations by then Deputy Secretary of Planning Larry Shifflet, STC Commissioner Karen Michael, and then STC Secretary Ron Drnevich, followed by a Q&A. Over 100 questions were received; all were answered and posted on TalkPATransportation.com, along with a recording and transcript of the forum.

Public outreach for the TYP ran from March 1 through April 30, 2023. The Transportation Survey received a record high 10,573 responses and 4,248 mapped issues. Results were made available on the TalkPATransportation.com webpage after the July 2023 STC meeting, and comments and issues were shared with regional partners.

Transportation projects in the TYP use a combination of federal, state, and other funding sources. Amounts are based on legislation, actual and anticipated budgets, and historical trends. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act/Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (IIJA/BIL) was signed into law in 2021 for five years, expiring in 2026, and increased funding for transportation and infrastructure and provided grant opportunities. The TYP assumes that funding will remain flat throughout the rest of the program. Pennsylvania has received over \$1 billion in funding from the BIL, including \$500 million for the Harrisburg I-83 South Bridge through the Large Bridge Investment Program.

Secretary Carroll thanked Senator Casey and his team for their efforts in helping to ensure Pennsylvania received the \$500 million South Bridge grant, the largest in PennDOT's history. The grant will also free up money to be able to be moved to other areas in the state.

Ms. Mulkerin agreed and noted that most grants will require matching funds. In Pennsylvania, those funds come from the annual state budget process, which determines funding amounts. She also agreed with Mr. Carroll's earlier statement appreciating the decoupling of state police funds from PennDOT's motor license funds and thanked the legislative members for their action.

Secretary Carroll thanked Representative Haddock, who was in attendance, for leadership in decoupling the state police funds along with all members of the general assembly.

Ms. Mulkerin said that between Federal, State, and Local funds, the 2025-2036 TYP provides over \$88 billion for all modes of transportation.

Ms. Mulkerin said that the TYP guides PennDOT and its partners in prudently managing resources to prioritize safe and efficient travel. Most Federal funds through BIL are tied to Federal Transportation Performance Measures, each of which has targets that are set and measured: Safety, Pavement/Bridge, System, and Transit.

The 2025 TYP is available digitally on TalkPATransportation.com.

Mr. Mark Tobin highlighted several projects from the digital version of the TYP. SR11 over SR2037, Susquehanna River and Railroad (MPMS 93931) is a \$75 million project, \$19 million of which is funded through federal discretionary funding. The I-81 NB/SB Preservation Pavement Replacement (MPMS 92435) is a \$95 million project funded through formula funds on the Interstate Maintenance Program.

Mr. Tobin then briefly showed the sections of the digital TYP that explain funding, the planning programs that PennDOT maintains, and public outreach. He also noted the Initiatives section, which shows PennDOT's ongoing goals and plans.

Ms. Mulkerin thanked Mr. Tobin for his leadership, the TYP team, the McCormick Taylor team, the PennDOT Central Office team, the District team, the MPOs and RPOs, and the local stakeholders.

Once STC approves the TYP, it will be posted to the TalkPATransportation.com website. Public materials will be distributed to the stakeholder email list of over 12,000 recipients and promoted via a press release to announce availability. The final 2025 STIP will be sent to the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Authority, and the Federal Environmental Protection Agency for review and approval. While the TYP would be adopted and posted, the 2025 STIP would remain a draft until federal approval is given.

ON A MOTION by Ms. Michael and seconded by Ms. Knoll, the 2025 12-Year Program was approved.

REPORTS

Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)

Ms. Jody Holton, Transportation Advisory Committee Chair, gave an update. There are three studies underway.

The Department of Aging's (DoA) master plan, *Aging Our Way in Pennsylvania: A Plan for Lifelong Independence*, has many tactics with PennDOT assigned as the lead for implementing. The TAC will be looking at how to implement those ideas, which largely center around transit, bicycle and pedestrian modes, driver services, and workforce development. Mr. Mark Murawski is chairing the study.

The second study is the E-Commerce Assessment & Package Convenience Fee Analysis. This study will look at land use and transportation impacts. Mr. Sam Arnold is chairing the effort. A panel discussion was held on August 7, 2024, involving members from Amazon, The City of

Philadelphia, Franklin County MPO, York County Planning Commission, and ROCK Commercial Real Estate.

The Transportation Performance Report (TPR) is underway and should be completed by February to allow work on the 2027 TYP to begin.

Executive Secretary

Executive Deputy Secretary, Mr. Larry Shifflet, gave an update.

Mr. Shifflet again thanked Senator Casey and other congressional members and said that it is not a small feat to get an entire congressional delegation to sign a single letter in support for a single project. He thanked that delegation and the four chairs who also submitted letters of support.

Secretary Carroll said that advocacy is needed to ensure the new members of Congress understand the importance of the IIJA/BIL and its positive impact in Pennsylvania across all modes.

Administrative/Budget

Deputy Secretary for Administration, Mr. Corey Pellington, highlighted the Bureau of Equal Opportunity report.

The Mifflin County Maintenance Office Bid Advertisement was scheduled for July but was pushed back until October.

The Bureau of Equal Opportunity's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise program study was completed and will be used for the next version of the methodology. The report will be presented to PennDOT and be posted on the website.

As of June 30, 2024, there are 333 vacant permanent Transportation Equipment Operator positions, and 61 vacant permanent Mechanic positions statewide in the Winter Maintenance Program. Approval to fill 954 seasonal winter Operator positions has been approved, and the positions are live on the website.

Highway and Bridge Program

Deputy Secretary Ms. Christine Norris highlighted several sections of the Highway and Bridge Program report.

The forecasted number of poor-condition state-owned bridges is expected to increase by 2035, with good quality remaining stable. The forecast is based on current financial guidance. The 2008-2024 improvement is due to increased funding programs such as P3 investments such as the replacement of 558 bridges in the Rapid Bridge Replacement Project and FHWA funding through the IIJA/BIL and Act 89.

Forecasted pavement conditions show a similar pattern at current funding levels; roads with poor mileage are expected to go from 10,005 miles in 2023 to 15,457 miles by 2035 due to funding constraints, materials prices, and inflation. Excellent mileage is expected to decrease from 10,808 in 2023 to 7079 in 2035.

The five-year average of fatalities is generally down, but there has been a slight uptick in the past few years. The highest number was 1,240 in the 2011-2015 average and is currently 1,161 for the 2019-2023 average. The lowest point was 1,141 in 2016-2020. There is continuous work on projects across the state to improve roadway safety.

PennDOT is on track to meet or exceed the 2024 letting goal of \$2.8 billion. 367 projects have been let, worth \$1.6 billion. Recent large project bids have been the I-80/I-99 High Speed Interchange in Centre County for approximately \$260 million, State Route 115 over I-81 in Luzerne County for \$61 million, and the I-376 Commercial Street Bridge project in Allegheny County for \$95 million. There are still 250 projects expected to be let for \$1.19 billion.

Inflation is still causing construction materials to increase, but at a significantly lower rate than previously. PennDOT's estimates have caught up to inflation costs, with bids coming in at approximately 1% under-estimate. Asphalt prices have increased 5% in Q2 2024. 93% of construction projects in Q2 have come in on time, well above the goal of 80%.

Secretary Carroll noted that although the projected increase in poor quality of roads and bridges is concerning, the forecasts were made assuming flat funding going forward.

Multimodal Transportation

Deputy Secretary for Multimodal Transportation, Ms. Meredith Biggica, highlighted several segments of the report.

Ms. Biggica said that the multimodal grants are expected to be announced in the next few days.

The enacted budget contained \$80.5 million for transit, about \$69 million of that will be distributed through Operating formula Agencies. The remaining \$10.5 million will be distributed towards shared ride programs.

Two rail freight grant programs opened on August 5 and will close on August 30, 2024.

After a safety management inspection with the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority and the Federal Transit Administration, PennDOT is in the process of reorganizing the State Safety Oversight Office, moving it from the Bureau of Rail Freight, Ports and Waterways to the Multimodal depute. The reorganization was just approved and is being implemented.

The Keystone Line Track Renewal Project will cease truncation at Lancaster in November. Additional track work will continue to be done, but service impacts should be minor.

Office of Planning

Deputy Secretary for Planning, Ms. Kristin Mulkerin, gave an update from the Office of Planning.

Four applications for federal grants have been submitted since the last STC meeting, all on the technical side and not tied to any project. Six grant applications are still out for consideration.

22 grants have been awarded to Pennsylvania in 2024, totaling over \$1 billion. Seven grants have been awarded since the last meeting, totaling \$609.3 million, including the \$500 million for the I-81 South Bridge.

National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Program

Ms. Natasha Fackler gave an update on the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure program.

Round 1B awards will be announced shortly. When the announcements are made, the NEVI program believes it will have filled all the Alternative Fuel Corridor (AFC) gaps, which will be part of the State Plan Update.

The State Plan Update must be done every year, and this year it has been requested that the update include plans for post-AFC. These plans will be out for public comment for two months.

Secretary Carroll said the first NEVI station in Pennsylvania was near Pittston. Shortly after that came I-80 in Venango County and Aston Borough, Delaware County. He noted that Pennsylvania is a national leader for NEVI under Ms. Fackler's leadership.

WORKING SESSION:

Mr. Rich Roman, District Executive of District 4, gave a presentation highlighting his district.

Mr. Roman said that he has been in the district for five years, and that he is very proud of his district. He detailed the previous week of preparing and responding to a significant rainfall, staffing changes, and the visit of a presidential candidate, on top of the normal duties of the district, and thanked his staff for not letting anything fall through the cracks

District 4 has approximately 800 employees across six counties: Lackawanna, Luzerne, Pike, Susquehanna, Wayne, and Wyoming. The district contains approximately 4,000 miles of road and 2,100 bridges, with billions of dollars of projects in design, and over a billion dollars in active construction projects.

District 4 contains parts of several planning organizations. Susquehanna and Wyoming counties are part of the Northern Tier RPO, which is shared with District 3. Pike County is part of the NEPA MPO, shared with District 5. District 4 contains the entirety of Lackawanna Luzerne MPO and the independent Wayne County.

Mr. Roman said that a major focus of the district is bridge condition. About 75% of the District 4- TYP is bridge projects. There are 184 miles of interstate in the district, with \$3 billion worth of projects on the TYP. Other focus areas are Back to Basics Maintenance, Winter Traffic Services, Quality Construction, and Safety.

District 4's 1 TYP has 460 projects totaling about \$4 billion, 75% of which is bridge work. The Interstate TYP has \$3.4 billion in 15 projects in design, with four additional programs waiting for advancement to select a consultant.

He noted the scale of the efforts by explaining that there is a plan to widen and update the bridges and interchanges of the President Biden Expressway in Scranton, the cost is already at \$650 million for just seven miles of highway. The full plan is to eventually have three lanes on Interstate 81 from I-80 to Scranton, about forty miles.

District 4's bridge condition is 34.14% Good, and 19.35% Poor as of 2023, with a goal to reduce poor-quality bridges to 10%.

Mr. Roman said that District 4 is letting over 100 projects for \$276 million in 2024. 44.2% of the total letting is bridge projects, with 38.9% going to roadway improvements.

District 4 has 178 projects for transportation alternatives, totaling \$152.8 million dollars. This includes 42 trail projects, 59 streetscape and safe routes to school projects, 18 paving and bike lanes, 13 transportation building rehabilitations, 9 pedestrian bridges and bridge replacements, and 5 train/trolley car restorations. This has been made possible through the support of 90 local project sponsors.

At the beginning of the year, there were 99 active projects totaling \$838 million. 2024 will add 102 more projects for \$276 million. This is a total of 1.14 billion, the first time the district has passed one billion dollars in active projects.

Mr. Roman highlighted several active projects, including SR 435 over I-84 in Lackawanna County, I-81 concrete repairs in Luzerne County, SR 209 Arch Rehabilitation in Pike County, SR 170 Structure Replacement in Wayne County, SR 29 paving in Susquehanna County, and SR 6 paving in Wyoming County.

District 4 performed the first Digital Delivery bridge replacement in the state on a 52-foot bridge replacement on SR 3006 in Lackawanna County. The bridge was originally built in 1951. The project was designed and constructed entirely digitally, without paper plans.

Mr. Kingsborough asked if Mr. Roman could put a number on cost savings. Mr. Roman said that he's not sure if this project had much savings due to being an early digital project with initial costs, but as time goes on and contractors become more experienced, savings would increase.

Mr. Neilson said that he had talked to contractors, and that digital delivery had saved them a lot of time during the project. He asked if Mr. Roman had seen time savings in the project. Mr.

Roman said they did and noted the ease of making changes to the design being nearly instantly delivered, instead of needing to print and send paper plans to the field.

Mr. Roman showed images of the design of the rebar structure of the 3d bridge model and noted that an inspector could easily look at plans and find issues in the model. The digital delivery system could also make calculating needed quantities easier.

Mr. Roman said the District's maintenance department does 80,000 tons of pothole patching, 7,000 acres of mowing, 2,000 acres of herbicide, and 32,000 hours of litter pickup a year. The core cyclical maintenance activities consist of 573 miles of seal coat using 2.6 million gallons of oil, 725 miles of crack sealing, and 1,600 miles of shoulder cutting this year without any increase in funds. He said that this back-to-basics approach allows for better operation of existing roads. Previously, 1-2 inches of rainfall could take 5-6 weeks to recover from, but now they were largely back to normal activities after the rainstorm the previous Friday.

In the Hazelton area, there are 31 million square feet of proposed distribution centers planned in an area a mile square. Route 6 also has 12 million square feet of distribution center planned. He said it was exciting, but it came with challenges, such as more trucks, congestion, and pressure at interchanges.

Mr. Roman said that District 4 has been positioning State Troopers in yellow trucks in work zones, communicating with a trooper outside of the construction area that will pull over speeders. The District maintains a good relationship with the Dunmore barracks.

Every Friday afternoon, District 4 will send a link to all the work they're doing the following week. Their webpage is actively updated, and they are aggressive with press releases. The safety press office also holds events on impaired driving, child safety seats, aggressive driving, and especially school-based topics like school bus safety as the school year starts again.

Mr. Ritchie noted the mountainous terrain in the district, which presents complexities that states in the Midwest don't have. He thanked Mr. Roman for his and his team's hard work.

Secretary Carroll said that while the meeting was primarily about the TYP, the maintenance component of PennDOT is very important, and activities such as crack sealing and shoulder cutting is significant. PennDOT maintenance teams across the state have a very difficult job, and they do it well. The twin bridge project is important, but shoulder cutting on an SR in Wyoming County is just as important.

COMMISSIONERS REPORT:

Mr. Kingsborough noted the efforts in making and coordinating the program update and thanked those involved for putting it all together. Secretary Carroll agreed, saying that things done well do not happen by accident.

Mr. Neilson said that the House will be going across the state to talk about future funding. A schedule would be released shortly after the meeting. There is a lack of transportation funding;

with the increase of EVs and alternate transportation methods, these hurt PennDOT's funding that supports the construction and maintenance of roads.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mr. Ritchie said that Senator Argall provided a comment in writing. Secretary Carroll said that he would address those concerns.

OTHER BUSINESS:

None.

NEXT MEETING:

The next STC quarterly meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, December 18, 2024, in Harrisburg, PA.**

ADJOURNMENT:

ON A MOTION by Ms. Michael and seconded by Mr. Kingsborough, the STC quarterly meeting was adjourned at 11:47 p.m.

FOLLOW-UP

Senator Argall's letter was concerned about the intersection of State Routes 183 and 901 in Cressona Borough. A study exists on the draft 2025 NEPA TIP to identify potential improvements to safety and congestion at that intersection, set to begin in federal fiscal year 2026.