

PENNSYLVANIA STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
BUSINESS MEETING
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA
MAY 15, 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:

State Transportation Commission Vice-Chair Sharon Knoll convened the quarterly business meeting of the State Transportation Commission (STC) at 10:01 AM on May 15, 2024, in Erie, PA.

ROLL CALL:

Commissioners Present:

1. Honorable Sharon Knoll

Commissioners Present on the Phone:

1. Honorable Ed Neilson, Kyle Wagonseller, Alternate Present
2. Honorable Kerry Benninghoff, Josiah Shelley, Alternate Present
3. Honorable Karen Michael
4. Honorable James Kingsborough
5. Honorable Marty Flynn, Noelle Scott, Alternate Present
6. Honorable Wayne Langerholc, Jr., Nolan Ritchie, Alternate Present
7. Honorable Paige Willan

Commissioners Not Present

1. Honorable Michael Carroll

MINUTES:

ON A MOTION by Ms. Willan, seconded by Mr. Kingsborough, and unanimously approved, the February 28, 2024, STC business meeting minutes were accepted.

CHAIR'S REMARKS:

Ms. Knoll gave brief remarks welcoming the STC to Erie and thanked District 1 for presenting at the meeting.

12-YEAR TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM:

Ms. Kristin Mulkerin, Deputy Secretary for Planning, gave an update on the 12-Year Program changes. There were 947 program adjustments for consideration. In the reporting period of

February 10 through April 26, 2024, there were 247 project/phase additions, 640 changes, and 60 deletions. The changes represent an increase of \$707,804,480.

Ms. Mulkerin highlighted several significant project changes. Twenty Mile Creek Bridge in the Erie Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) was closed on February 21, 2024 and changed from a rehabilitation to a replacement.

The second focused project was the Interstate changes in District 1, specifically the replacement of the bridge carrying SR 318 over Interstate 376 in Mercer County. This was the addition of the federal emergency funds, stemming from an overpass bridge strike on December 7, 2023.

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

REPORTS

Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)

Mr. Mark Murawski, Transportation Advisory Committee Vice-Chair, gave an update from the TAC.

At the April 10th, 2024, TAC meeting, it was agreed to move forward with a study: Changing Demographics and Impact on the Transportation Workforce Needs.

The E-Commerce study, approved at the February meeting, is progressing. The study was initially identified by the Transportation Revenue Options Commission (TROC) report. . The study has a 14-member task force, chaired by Mr. Sam Arnold. The first meeting was held on April 24 and identified issues that supports the scope of work. A notable feature is a moderated panel discussion on the subject in July. The goal of the study is to identify land use changes in Pennsylvania related to the growth of e-commerce and the transformation of retail spaces and consumer trends, as well as evaluate the economic impacts of these changes and how they affect Pennsylvania's transportation network. The study would also evaluate a potential package delivery fee, focusing on other states, such as Colorado and Minnesota, that have already enacted this fee. The study is expected to be done in December and presented to the TAC and STC at the February meetings.

The second study in progress is the Demographics study, originating from the Center for Rural Pennsylvania's report about changing demographics released in Fall 2023. The report noted transportation as an area that should be further explored. Additionally, the Governor issued an executive order that required a study to be done by the Department of Aging (DOA). The TAC's study will, therefore, be in two parts, the first will focus on transportation workforce development needs, and the second will be a transportation component of the DOA's report. Mr. Murawski will chair the task force. He estimates that the study will be ready for approval at the February or April 2025 meetings.

The process for the 2025 Transportation Performance Report (TPR) has begun. The TPR has been updated every two years since 2013, and it currently focuses on Safety, Mobility,

Preservation, Accountability, Funding, and Freight. The 2025 TPR will be released in February 2025 and will start the 2027 program update. A task force has been formed to guide the effort.

During TAC's April meeting, presentations were given on PennDOT's upcoming Lane Reservation System and Micromobility. Members were invited to make suggestions for other presentation topics.

Executive Secretary

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

Mr. Shifflet thanked Ms. Knoll for her efforts on the Bayfront project in Erie, and District Executive Mr. Brian McNulty and his leadership team for their efforts and attendance at the meeting. He noted the upcoming Interstate 80 and 90 projects.

Mr. Shifflet spoke about the governor's proposed budget containing a \$282.2 million increase for public transit, the first increase in over a decade. Public transit is not only a city service; in fact, all 67 counties have shared ride services. He noted that this is the beginning of new discussions about infrastructure.

Administrative/Budget

Deputy Secretary for Administration, Mr. Corey Pellington, gave an update from the Administrative/Budget Office.

December allocations have been paid out, with the next allocations for State Police penalties, Act 89, and liquid fuels is set for June 3, 2024.

The Bureau of Equal Opportunity (BEO) has appointed Dr. Megan Peterson as permanent Director.

The Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) final rule, issued by the United States Department of Transportation, was announced and went into effect on May 9, 2024. BEO is coordinating with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to ensure compliance.

An expansion of Workforce Development programs is underway, which includes the federal On the Job Training (OJT) program and the Commonwealth's Workforce Transformation Program.

This year, Human Resources created a specific classification for engineering interns. For the 2023 summer intern program, PennDOT received 1561 applications. Under the new engineering-specific application, PennDOT received 2635 applications for the 2024 program. The internship program continues as a recruitment tool for the department.

Driver and Vehicle Services

Deputy Secretary for Driver and Vehicle Services (DVS), Ms. Kara Templeton, gave an update.

April is National Donate Life Month, and DVS held an organ donor event at the Summerdale Driver License Center with the Department of Health and several organ procurement organizations to raise awareness of organ and tissue donation. Over 49% of driver's license and identification card holders have the organ donor designation.

Work on staggered apportion registration continues. Beginning March 1, 2023, all registrants applying for new apportion registration accounts were able to choose a registration date. Historically, all registrations were due at the end of May. The staggered approach allows for more efficient handling of those registrations.

PennDOT brought its call center operations in-house at the end of February. There are four call center locations across the commonwealth, which provides redundancy in case of inclement weather, as well as providing jobs in more areas. Call center operators are gaining more experience, and the average speed of answer and average abandon rate has improved since the last month of vendor service. Before transitioning in-house, there were 26 representatives. There were over 50 at the end of April and 70 at the time of this meeting.

The REAL ID federal compliance date remains May 7, 2025, with the current opt-in rate being 21.3%. PennDOT continues to anticipate attaining a 25% adoption rate by the deadline.

There are 25 counties that collect the Local Use Fee. Lawrence County repealed its Local Use Fee Ordinance effective May 31, 2024.

Multimodal Transportation

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

Multimodal is working with the Pittsburgh Port Commission (PPC) on the removal of the Elizabeth Lock and Dam, scheduled for July 2024. The PPC and PennDOT will administer a \$4 million grant to dredge and support the port industry along the river. The Monongahela River will rise 2-3 feet due to the removal.

Erie Port acquired Erie Coke Corporation, a 182-acre industrial site along Lake Erie. Erie Port and the County Redevelopment Authority will seek funding for site remediation.

Ms. Biggica noted that Mr. Shifflet and Secretary Carroll continue to travel around the state in support of the Governor's budget proposal. Multimodal agencies were provided notices of funding for the next year equivalent to the previous year's funding. If an increase occurs, there will be a follow-up letter.

Ridership continues to increase in all transit agencies.

Amtrak is undertaking track replacement between Harrisburg and Lancaster, forcing the truncation of trains between the hours of 8 AM to 4 PM, Monday through Thursday. A bus bridge is available. To offset the impact to commuters, PennDOT opened the parking lot on Keller Avenue next to the station as an overflow. Shuttles will be run between the station and the lot. A pedestrian bridge will be constructed to connect the lot and the Lancaster station.

Keystone Line ridership continues to increase, and the 2026 date for the second Pennsylvania Line is still on target.

Highway and Bridge Program

Deputy Secretary, Mr. Michael Rebert, highlighted several Highway and Bridge Program report sections.

Mr. Rebert said that PennDOT's winter operations used \$170 million, 86% of its \$197 million budget. That left-over \$27 million was moved to spring and summer maintenance operations.

PennDOT is on track for the expected \$2.8 billion in project lettings for 2024, having already bid 270 out of 650 scheduled projects totaling \$929 million.

Mr. Rebert said that he believes that PennDOT's estimates have caught up with inflation, with bids coming in at 2% under the estimate. Long-term projects remain an issue, however, partially due to contractors trying to cover their risk.

Recent large projects bid on include a \$23 million betterment project on Interstate 99 in District 9 near Altoona and \$48 million for the Charles Anderson Bridge in Allegheny County, District 11.

Office of Planning

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

PennDOT has submitted five additional grant applications since the previous STC meeting, totaling \$909.4 million in requests, including the resubmission of the I-83 South Bridge.

Pennsylvania has been awarded 15 grants thus far in 2024, totaling \$438 million. Eight projects have received \$188 million since the last meeting.

The awards for the Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TASA) have been made. Project awards were announced on April 24, 2024. One hundred thirty-seven (137) eligible applications were received, with 55 being chosen for a total of \$49.5 million.

As of the previous meeting, federal funding was operating under a continuing resolution. Congress passed the final funding needed for Fiscal Year 2024 in March.

Ms. Mulkerin also thanked the planning partners for the work they do, including the program update. Many public comment periods are wrapping up, which will be included in the 12-Year Program approval in August.

WORKING SESSION:

District 1 Presentation

Mr. Brian McNulty, District Executive of District 1, gave a presentation on District 1.

District 1 has a population of 562,000, with 833 employees managing 3,996 miles of roadway and 2,066 bridges. The District is the first statewide for Highway Occupancy Permit review times, and 100% of its state bridges are inspected on cycle. The District does many of its designs in-house, saving \$10.8 million, and is the first in-house design team to use 3D modeling. He noted the difficulty of winter operations, and that one hundred inches of snow is average for a season in the District.

As of April 2024, 92.6% of all District 1 bridges are in good or fair condition. In 2007, about 15% of the bridges were in poor condition. District 1 began to invest more heavily in bridges, and now beats the statewide average of 90.9%. Erie County itself scores approximately 95% good/fair. Pavement conditions in District 1 surpass the statewide average in the International Roughness Index (IRI) median score.

Recruitment has been an important topic, with the District currently having 77 vacancies after a wave of retirements. The District has reached out to schools and has held 36 recruitment events.

District 1 has had an increase in the 5-year traffic fatality trend and is trying to reduce this number through safety projects, press releases, and mock Diving Under the Influence (DUI) demonstrations at schools.

Mr. McNulty said District 1 was on the path of totality for the April 8, 2024, eclipse and did a great job managing the event. The press office was proactive in issuing guidance, and oversized loads were restricted. Traffic and maintenance teams were prepared with digital message boards and plans for every road in the area. District employees worked with the State Police and other emergency services. No issues were reported during the event.

District 1 received increased funds from the Motor License Fund (MLF) due to the decoupling of State Police from the MLF and was able to purchase five new rollers, three crack sealers, two loaders, and an additional backhoe, chipper, gradall excavator, mower, and widener.

District 1 had funding successes through grants and discretionary funds. \$144.3 million in additional funds have been received from 2021 through 2025.

Mr. McNulty said District 1 strongly values its local partnerships, exemplified in the Messerall Truss Bridge project. The bridge is a bowstring arch bridge built in 1876, which was in use for over 150 years near Titusville. District 1 worked with the Department of Conservation and

Natural Resources through a Transportation Alternative Set-Aside grant to refurbish and move the bridge to Pymatuning State Park. The project won several awards at the state and national levels.

The Route 62 Railroad Tunnel is noted as a trouble area for the District. The Tunnel, constructed in 1922, has low clearance at 11'7" and is in a non-standard tight s-curve. The route impedes freight and detour operations. The district is working on designs to improve the tunnel. Congressman Mike Kelley secured \$3 million in funds to begin the project, but a \$15 million gap is estimated.

There are a series of projects on Interstate 80 to improve the first 15 miles, starting at the Ohio line, in three five-mile sections over six years.

At about 11 AM on December 7, 2024, a truck hit a bridge on Route 318, severely damaging the bridge. Bridge hits are common, having seven significant hits in the past ten years. The truck cut through two beams and damaged a third. The bridge was expected to have twenty more years of service and was not programmed for repairs. Within 33 hours, I-376 was reopened, and within five months, bids were opened for a new structure. Construction began April 15, 2024, and the bridge is expected to reopen by November. Mr. McNulty thanked the Central Office for the emergency funding to allow the quick turnaround of the bridge.

Mr. McNulty noted the Five Points Roundabout in Erie County. Formerly, several intersections converged awkwardly, which are now combined into a single large roundabout. The project won a Diamond Award from the American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) of PA.

The I-79/Route 20 interchange in Erie was being considered for rehabilitation, but it was determined that it would be a better use of funds to redesign the interchange instead. The proposed reimagining could potentially have two shorter bridges instead of six long bridges. The proposed changes to the interchange are still being studied.

The Route 20 bridge over Twenty Mile Creek in Erie County was scheduled for rehabilitation but was unexpectedly closed and moved to total replacement after inspection. The route carried approximately 2,500 vehicles a day and was not a bridge the District felt comfortable closing for long. The bridge was included in the Transportation Improvement Program but forced delays on nine other projects. PennDOT Central Office was able to assist by contributing \$10 million to the emergency project.

Interstate 90 in Erie County is undergoing a full restoration over six projects. Three have been completed, with two more anticipating completion in 2024. The final segment anticipates construction in 2028-2029.

The Erie Bayfront Parkway is undergoing a series of large construction projects. Through several partnerships, other ancillary projects have sprung from the larger whole, such as the 12th Street signal improvements, a multimodal bridge at Soldiers' and Sailors' Home, a West Front Street project, and Cranberry Street signal installation. The Central Bayfront Parkway project will add traffic calming measures, multimodal trails, and aesthetic improvements to the roadway.

COMMISSIONERS REPORT:

None

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mr. Tim May, Erie MPO Coordinating Committee Chair and Hartford Township Supervisor, showed his appreciation for Mr. McNulty and the District's accomplishments and indicating the District is a responsible steward of funding to Erie County. He also noted the approachability of the District 1 staff in his role as a township supervisor.

Mr. David Mitchell of Corry, Erie County said he appreciated the efforts of the MPO in fostering local efforts. He also noted the efforts of Mr. McNulty and previous District Engineers and reminded the STC that Northwestern Pennsylvania is a major national thoroughfare between New York City and Chicago. He also thanked the STC for their efforts.

OTHER BUSINESS:

None.

NEXT MEETING:

The next STC quarterly meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, August 14, 2024, in Scranton.**

ADJOURNMENT:

ON A MOTION by Mr. Kingsborough and seconded by Ms. Willan, the STC quarterly meeting was adjourned at 11:09 AM.