

PENNSYLVANIA STATE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
BUSINESS MEETING  
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA  
FEBRUARY 6, 2023



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

**CALL TO ORDER:**

A business meeting of the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) was called to order in the Keystone Building, room 8N1, and on Microsoft Teams at 10:06 a.m. on February 6, 2023.

**CHAIR'S REMARKS:**

TAC Chair, Ms. Jody Holton, AICP, gave brief remarks welcoming TAC members to the meeting.

**MINUTES:**

**ON A MOTION** by Mr. John Pocius, P.E., seconded by Mr. Alan Blahovec, and unanimously approved, the Minutes of the December 6, 2022, TAC Business Meeting were accepted without changes.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

None.

**SECRETARY'S REMARKS:**

Acting Transportation Secretary Mr. Michael B. Carroll gave a brief introduction. He stated that he was familiar with the TAC and its operations from his time as a Representative in the state legislature, and that he was excited to work with the committee.

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION UPDATE:**

**Administration and Budget**

Acting Deputy Secretary for Administration, Michelle Jennings, said that PennDOT is prepared for the Executive order that removed the need for a college degree from many of the positions in the Department. There is also a new bureau director for Equal Opportunity, and they are also looking to remove barriers to disadvantaged businesses.

Ms. Jennings stated that out of 940 temporary winter truck operator positions, only 48% could be filled. There are still 406 openings statewide.

Hiring for the summer intern program is in motion, as the Department hopes to get an early start on the process. It was noted that the process had started later in previous years, and this had impeded getting qualified interns, as many had already committed to other opportunities.

### **Driver and Vehicle Services**

Deputy Secretary Kurt Myers described four new license plates of both Agriculture and Military themes. The Pollinator Conservation registration plate supports the Pollinator Conservation Program Fund. The Blue Star Family plate is for family members of active-duty armed service members. A combined Afghanistan/Iraq Veterans plate is for veterans of those theaters. The Air Medal plate is for service members with meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flight. All four plates became available March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023.

Mr. Myers also spoke about reducing the number and value of unpaid tolls required before vehicle owners will be prohibited from renewing their vehicle registration, as per HB 1486, effective January 2, 2023. The numbers are being lowered from 6 to 4 unpaid tolls and from \$500 to \$250.

Mr. Myers also mentioned efforts to streamline electronic signatures for forms. Currently this is only for forms without a monetary cost or notarization but will explore adding those forms in the future. Additionally, select forms are being analyzed to determine if the notary requirement can be removed.

Mr. Myers noted that PennDOT is ready for the REAL-ID rollout. 1.95 million people have opted in to REAL-ID.

### **Multimodal Transportation**

Acting Deputy Secretary, Andrew Batson, AICP, stated that public transport ridership is slowly recovering from the pandemic but is still below pre-pandemic levels. A shared ride sustainability study ends in March, which is focused on trying to find sustainable methods to overcome the recent financial difficulties.

Mr. Batson stated that there are grant opportunities from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) for expanding freight and passenger rail service throughout the U.S., valued at \$102 billion. The FRA has three of those grant programs open for application, totaling \$13.5 billion. PennDOT is applying for funding in each of the programs, the most public being the Corridor Identification Program, which would help expand passenger rail service.

Multimodal transportation has begun working with the Pedalcycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee to provide guidance to help promote pedestrian access.

Ms. Holton requested more information on the Corridor Identification Program, as the Transportation Advisory Committee had created the Keystone Connected plan.

Mr. Batson stated that there is no set dollar value for the Program, being a “pipeline” of projects for the Federal Railroad Administration going forward. Several corridors in Pennsylvania had expressed interest, including Reading-Philadelphia, Scranton-York, Philadelphia-Pittsburgh, and an Erie coalition for Buffalo-Cleveland.

Mr. Fred Strathmeyer asked about the new administration's plans to increase access to the port of Philadelphia via rail.

Acting Secretary Carroll responded that he has a meeting scheduled to discuss those issues.

### **Highway Administration**

Deputy Secretary for Highway Administration Melissa Batula, P.E. stated that the letting program has a goal of \$2.7 billion in 2023, and 38% of that amount is going towards bridge projects. Construction price increases and workforce issues in both the Department and contractors have been prevalent.

Ms. Batula also stated that Digital Delivery for contractors was first rolled out in December, providing 3D models of the work for potential contractors' pre-bid. Another would be released next month. Bridges will be released in 2024, with full delivery in 2025.

Ms. Batula addressed the winter situation, and the workforce challenges in hiring. The mild winter means that salt usage and expenditures are down. Any funds not spent on winter prep in March would be put into maintenance contracts.

Mr. Pocius asked for clarification on the construction items.

Ms. Batula said that asphalt, concrete, rebar, and steel are all up in price due to inflation.

Mr. Mark Murawski acknowledged the efforts in the Fern Hollow Bridge situation, complimenting the speed and quality of completion. He also highlighted the need for a comprehensive transportation funding bill, as well as updated indexing, especially with the jet fuel tax.

Ms. Holton stated that inflation and indexing is an issue that should be revisited.

Acting Secretary Carroll stated that the conversation of transportation funding is important to the Governor and that he looks forward to working with the chairs of the House and Senate to find a comprehensive approach to fund transportation and the state police.

### **Office of Planning**

Deputy Secretary Larry Shifflet announced that the 2025 12-Year Program update has begun. Financial Guidance meetings have already happened, and General and Procedural Guidance meetings are scheduled.

Mr. Shifflet stated that the department submitted 13 applications for discretionary Federal funds and has received \$69 million for the Central Susquehanna Valley Throughway (CSVT) and \$78 million for Philadelphia's Roosevelt Boulevard.

Mr. Michael A. Carroll, P.E., thanked PennDOT for working with him to obtain the grant for Roosevelt Blvd and committed to being an excellent partner in the future.

### **WORKING SESSION:** **2023 Transportation Performance Report (TPR)**

Brian Funkhouser, Michael Baker International, presented the Transportation Performance Report. Today marks the tenth anniversary of the report, and the sixth iteration thereof. This is also the first version of the report to show the pandemic's effects across various aspects of transportation. The report is viewable to the public online.

Mr. Funkhouser gave a brief overview of the report website, pointing out that each of the six sections has a narrative and several measures. The Freight section is new this year, furthering support of the new Freight Movement Plan.

**ON A MOTION** by Mr. Elam Herr, seconded by Mr. Michael A. Carroll, and unanimously approved, the 2023 Transportation Performance Report was approved to move forward to the State Transportation Commission.

### **Studies Update**

Mr. Funkhouser gave an update on potential studies for the new year. Two of the 13 potential studies were ranked higher than others in a survey of TAC Members and PennDOT: Truck Parking and Local Match Challenges.

Mr. Funkhouser highlighted the five objectives for the Truck Parking study:

- Update key data elements from the 2019-20 PennDOT data collection program,
- Develop a methodology to identify highway corridors with the most severe truck parking capacity shortfalls,
- Identify areas where capacity is needed,
- Establish a process for facilitating, partnering, planning, and funding new parking capacity,
- Support and inform PennDOT's data needs for the next update of the State Freight Plan.

Mr. Funkhouser then highlighted the Local Match study objectives:

- To understand/define the problem's extent and dimensions for municipalities with an inordinate share of tax-exempt real estate,
- To identify any constraints, i.e., legal, policy, etc., that may limit flexibility toward waiving or reducing local matches,
- To understand any trends involving untaxed parcels,
- To identify potential options for assisting municipalities in these situations.

Mr. Funkhouser used the example of Benezette Township in Elk County, which has a population of 300, a budget of \$300,000, and hosts the Elk Viewing Visitors Center, a major state-owned facility. The access to the facility is over a township road, which needs about \$1.5 million in repairs. Only 9.2% of the township is privately owned.

Mr. Funkhouser said that while Benezette is an extreme example, there are similar issues in county seats, where a significant amount of land is owned by tax-exempt entities.

Ms. Rebecca Oyler offered additional suggestions to the truck parking project, such as other states' use of electronic logging device data to study parking locations and recommends involving private sector organizations and the Motor Carrier Safety Committee.

Ms. Amy Kessler spoke on the Local Match study, saying that the issues in Benezette are common in many northern counties, including Potter County. Very few municipalities apply for the PennDOT Multimodal grant which has a 30% match requirement. Many municipalities apply for the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED)'s Multimodal grant program, however, due to the 0% match.

Mr. Murawski asked if the opt-in \$5 registration fee would be useful in this situation. Ms. Kessler stated that it could be helpful, however the number of registered vehicles is too low to have a substantial effect.

Mr. Murawski stated that colleges are also tax-exempt but have made deals to voluntarily give money to local initiatives.

Ms. Kessler agreed and noted that there are also revenue-sharing opportunities, but many of these municipalities do not have the full-time staff to negotiate deals.

Ms. Holton noted that there are challenges to raising local match across the board, and that there are few options to raise local match requirements for transportation projects at the municipal/county level.

Mr. Herr noted that the \$5 fee goes to the counties, which most need to maintain county-owned roads and bridges. He also noted that the money that comes back from the State is meager per acre and that municipalities are returning to tar-and-chipping.

Mr. Strathmeyer noted that many of these areas' fire departments, EMTs, and schools do not exist anymore because they could not afford them. Populations are leaving these areas due to a lack of jobs. These road systems are still in need of repair, but solutions are not easy.

Mr. Pocius reiterated the need to help small municipalities, as Transportation Improvement Program money often does not go far enough to help.

Ms. Oyler clarified that the case study would be looking at more typical case studies and more extreme examples such as Benezette Township and Harrisburg City. Mr. Funkhouser stated that the task force would decide on the case studies.

Ms. Holton noted that a member of the TAC must chair the task force. Mr. Herr volunteered.

Ms. Holton said that these projects will be further scoped by the consultant team. The local match study may need the case studies to be broadened to look at ways to raise local funds.

**ON A MOTION** by Mr. John Pocius, seconded by Mr. Alan Blahovec, and unanimously approved, the *Truck Parking* and *Local Match* studies were approved to move forward.

**Automated Work Zone Speed Enforcement (AWZSE):**

Mr. Dan Farley gave an update on the AWZSE program status. The program's primary goal is to change motorist behavior in work zones. The program had 8,868 camera deployments between 2020 and 2022, with 1,088,780 violations issued and a 16.1% repeat rate. About 63% of those deployments have been on PennDOT roadways and 37% on Turnpike roadways. The program has received \$14.4 million in fine remittance, PennDOT received \$6.4 million, and the Turnpike received \$8 million. PennDOT's expenditures during that time have been \$10.4 million.

Mr. Farley stated that the average time to receive a violation from the program had been 25 days from the date of violation. It takes about 10 days to compile and send the information to Driver and Vehicle Services, then 15 days to identify the registered owner and send the violation, well within the 30-day requirement and 90 days for identification.

Mr. Farley then stated the benefits the program has produced. There has been a reduction of 38% in vehicles traveling above the speed limit in deployed areas and a 47% reduction in excessive speeding (11+ MPH over the limit). 75% of deployments have been in unprotected work zones, with significant decreases in speed in those areas. A study done by Purdue University showed that drivers conform to the posted limit closer to the unit.

Mr. Farley gave a brief detail on the proposed priorities for legislative action:

- Elimination of the Sunset Date
- Rebrand "Automated Enforcement" to "Safety Speed Cameras"
- Removal of required "ACTIVE" sign posting
- Withhold Registration Renewals for Non-Payment
- Allowance of Enforcement in Specific "Non-Active" Work Zones with a Safety Concern
- Financial Penalty on First Violation
- Clarification of Advance Signing Requirements
- Virtual Informal Hearings
- Responsible Party for Leased Vehicles

Mr. Farley closed by mentioning that Automated Enforcement is a tool to change motorist behavior as part of a holistic approach, and not just a "gotcha" enforcement of traffic laws.

Mr. Nolan Ritchie asked for clarification on the removal of the active sign postings.

Mr. Farley clarified that this refers to the requirement that the signs say "Active", thus allowing for more permanent and frequent signage, as well as working with police on after-hours safety concerns.

Mr. Myers asked that the language of Withholding Registration and Suspending Registration be clarified, as there are normal methods for suspending registrations. He also raised concerns about increasing the number of unregistered vehicles on the roads.

Mr. Herr raised concerns about people not paying, the involvement of the courts in the process, and public opinion.

Mr. Michael A. Carroll expressed the need for a holistic strategy in addressing these issues and working with the courts to assure that violators pay the fines.

**2022 TAC Annual Report**

Ms. Holton discussed the Annual Report highlights and the most recent studies the TAC has completed in the preceding calendar year. It provides the study purpose, completion dates, and the findings and recommendations for the four completed studies.

**ON A MOTION** by Mr. Elam Herr and seconded by Mr. John Pocius, and unanimously approved, the 2022 TAC Annual Report is approved.

**MEMBER UPDATES:**

None

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

None

**Adjournment**

**ON A MOTION** by Mr. John Pocius and seconded by Mr. Elam Herr, and unanimously approved, the TAC meeting was adjourned at 12:06 p.m.

**Attendance from the TAC Business Meeting  
February 6, 2023**

1. Ms. Jody Holton, AICP, Chair
2. Mr. Mark Murawski, Vice-Chair
3. Mr. Michael B. Carroll, Acting Secretary of Transportation
4. Mr. Jacob Finkel, alternate for Ms. Gladys Brown Dutrieuille, TAC Member
5. Mr. Paul Opiyo, alternate for Mr. Rick Siger, TAC Member
6. Mr. John Kashatus, alternate for Mr. Khalid Mumin, TAC Member
7. Mr. Fred Strathmeyer, alternate for Mr. Russell Redding, TAC Member
8. Ms. Tiffany Landis, alternate for Mr. Rich Negrin, TAC Member
9. Mr. Nolan Ritchie, alternate for Senator Wayne Langerholc, Jr., TAC Member
10. Senator Tim Kearney, TAC Member
11. Mr. Sam Arnold, alternate for Senator Tim Kearney, TAC Member
12. Ms. Laryssa Gaughen, alternate for Representative Kerry Benninghoff, TAC Member
13. Mr. Alan Blahovec, CCPM, TAC Member
14. Ms. Rebecca Oyler, TAC Member
15. Mr. Michael A. Carroll, P.E., TAC Member
16. Mr. Richard Barcaskey, TAC Member
17. Mr. Larry Nulton, PhD, TAC Member
18. Mr. John Pocius, P.E., TAC Member
19. Ms. Ashley Porter, TAC Member
20. Ms. Michelle Jennings, PennDOT
21. Mr. Kurt Myers, PennDOT
22. Ms. Melissa Batula, P.E., PennDOT
23. Mr. David Lapadat, PennDOT
24. Mr. Andrew Batson, AICP, PennDOT
25. Mr. Larry Shifflet, PennDOT
26. Mr. Nathan Walker, PennDOT
27. Ms. Erin Waters-Trasatt, PennDOT
28. Ms. Jessica Clark, PennDOT
29. Mr. Brian Hare, P.E., PennDOT
30. Ms. Lauryn Knuth, PennDOT
31. Ms. Karen Heath, PennDOT
32. Mr. Dan Keane, PennDOT
33. Mr. Terry Pinder, PennDOT
34. Mr. Kevin Wray, PennDOT
35. Ms. Kristin Mulkerin, PennDOT
36. Ms. Nicole Tyler, PennDOT
37. Mr. Dan Farley, PennDOT
38. Mr. Brian Shunk, PennDOT
39. Mr. Roy Gothie, PennDOT
40. Ms. Meredith Biggica, PennDOT
41. Ms. Amy Kessler, North Central RPO



42. Mr. Brian Funkhouser, Michael Baker International
43. Mr. Jim Ritzman, P.E., Pennoni
44. Mr. Keith M. Chase, GFNET
45. Ms. Megan Oliveria, McCormick Taylor
46. Ms. Natalie Cook, McNees-Winter Group
47. Mr. Justin Gensimore, Gmerek Government Relations, Inc