

PENNSYLVANIA STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
BUSINESS MEETING
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA
SEPTEMBER 13, 2023



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 10:07 a.m. on September 13, 2023, in Indiana, PA.

ROLL CALL:

Commissioners Present:

1. Honorable Michael B. Carroll
2. Honorable James Kingsborough

Commissioners Present on the Phone:

1. Honorable Ronald Drnevich
2. Honorable Kerry Benninghoff, Ms. Laryssa Gaugin, Alternate Present
3. Honorable Sharon Knoll
4. Honorable Karen Michael, P.E.
5. Honorable Marty Flynn, Mr. Justin Gensimore, Alternate Present
6. Honorable Wayne Langerholc, Jr., Mr. Nolan Ritchie, Alternate Present
7. Honorable Paige Willan

Commissioners Not Present

1. Honorable Ed Nielson

MINUTES:

ON A MOTION by Mr. James Kingsborough, seconded by Ms. Karen Michael, and unanimously approved, the June 14, 2023, STC business meeting minutes were accepted.

CHAIR'S REMARKS:

Mr. Michael Carroll remarked that this is his first commission meeting as Secretary of Transportation, and thanked District 10-0 for hosting the meeting. He thanked state Senator Hutchinson, Representative Struzzi, and the legislators who helped secure an additional \$125 million from the Motor License Fund (MLF) for PennDOT. These additional funds will make a real difference across the state: \$50 million will go to construction, \$50 million to maintenance,

and \$25 million to the Department fleet. Although this year's budget lowered the MLF allocation to the State Police to \$375 million, the budget includes additional moneys from the General Funds to cover the difference.

Mr. Carroll noted the talents and efforts of PennDOT employees and partners in dealing with the I-95 collapse, the bridge collapse in Fern Hollow, and the most recent collapse in Lackawanna County due to flooding.

12-YEAR TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM:

Deputy Secretary for Planning, Mr. Larry Shifflet, presented the 2023 12-Year Transportation Program (TYP) adjustments, stating that between May 27, 2023, and August 25, 2023, there were 1,405 program adjustments, including:

- 403 Project/Phase Additions
- 868 Project/Phase Changes
- 134 Project/Phase Removals

These changes represent a **\$283,648,427 decrease** for the reporting period.

Mr. Shifflet noted that we usually do not show a net reduction in funds for the 12-Year Program, adding that the anticipated Toll funding as a potential funding option for the I-83 South Bridge project caused the net decrease. He further explained that due to legislative action, tolling is no longer an option, so we removed that anticipated funding. The I-83 South Bridge project is still on the TYP and funded; however, it will be later than originally intended. Some projects had to be removed from the TYP to fund the I-83 South Bridge project, such as the I-81 Implementation Plan.

The I-83 South Bridge project will cost \$1.2 billion in total, which includes an estimated \$877 million for the main structure. The I-83 East Shore Section 3C project, which covers the section over Cameron Street, Amtrak, and PA-230, known as the "viaduct", will cost an additional estimated \$386 million.

Mr. Shifflet added to the Secretary's opening remarks regarding the I-95 Bridge collapse, noting that permanent repairs to the I-95 bridge will cost approximately \$20.5 million and be paid for through Federal Emergency funds.

Mr. Shifflet noted that they had submitted an application for the I-83 South Bridge to the federal MEGA multimodal discretionary grant program for the maximum amount of \$500 million on August 20, 2023. He further explained that the I-83 South Bridge is the #1 priority statewide, because of the traffic it carries and being weight posted, which doesn't allow super loads to cross the structure.

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

REPORTS

Executive Secretary

Executive Deputy Secretary, Ms. Cheryl Moon-Sirianni, began her report by discussing another employee hit in a work zone. She stressed the need to get people to slow down in work zones.

Ms. Moon-Sirianni mentioned the 54 conditional awards for the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) program. PennDOT will work closely with the awardees to get these charging stations built as soon as possible.

Ms. Moon-Sirianni also mentioned the focus on workforce development, noting the large number of vacancies at PennDOT and in the transportation and construction industries. She said PennDOT is working with partners on transportation initiatives, as well as updating the on-the-job training programs with Arizona and Texas. There is also outreach to schools and students to bring them to the industries.

Ms. Moon-Sirianni noted improvements (short and long-term) to the Highway Occupancy Permit (HOP) program are being made. Initiatives are being finalized, including updates to PennDOT procedures and educating partners on submitting applications to help streamline the process.

Ms. Moon-Sirianni spoke about the amount of rainfall and flooding in recent years. Due to the high amount of rainfall and flooding, the current design standards are being looked at. A campaign (#TurnAroundDontDrown) is planned to remind drivers to never drive on flooded roads or ignore road closed signs, and it just takes two feet of fast-moving water to carry away most vehicles, including large SUVs.

Administrative/Budget

Deputy Secretary for Administration, Mr. Corey Pellington, highlighted the Bureau of Equal Opportunity report. A time extension was requested from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for the submission of the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Methodology for 2024-2026. This methodology will have a 30-day public comment period from September 16, 2023, through October 16, 2023, with submittal to FHWA by November 1, 2023.

The Bureau of Equal Opportunity will hire two additional staff to aid in the expansion of the On-The-Job Training program. The Bureau will also be partnering with the Department of General Services (DGS) and the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) to implement measures of an executive order focusing on Small and Diverse Businesses.

PennDOT has finalized its dedicated internal HR office within the Office of Administration. Non-civil service hiring changes have gone into effect, which should expedite hiring processes for those positions. The classifications for Engineering interns will be separated from other student intern classifications.

In addition to the projects listed, the Bureau of Office Services has been approved for 27 mission-critical capital projects across the state, including salt storage facilities, sewer treatment plants, roof treatments, and HVAC/Fire system upgrades.

Driver and Vehicle Services

Deputy Secretary for Driver and Vehicle Services (DVS), Ms. Kara Templeton, highlighted key items from the STC Book.

Registration plate reissuance continues, expanding to “G” and “H” plates being replaced via the decentralized program, as the opportunity arises through agents. “D” plates have been moved to centralized replacement, and owners will be notified via letter about the need to replace the plate.

Dealers may now order temporary plates and return temporary registration plates online.

PennDOT has implemented a School Bus Under the Hood Waiver from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration to address the school bus driver shortage. This exempts bus drivers from taking the “under the hood” portion of the Commercial Driver License (CDL) test. The waiver only applies to new school bus applicants with “school bus” and “passenger” endorsements and an “intrastate only” restriction may take advantage of the current federal waiver, which is permissible through November 27, 2024.

PennDOT released a modernized CDL skills test, removing redundancy in the test and allowing for the use of a checklist as a memory aid for the vehicle inspection portion of the test.

As part of Act 112 of 2022, there is now an option to donate \$5 to the Pennsylvania Children’s Trust Fund (PA CTF) during license renewal. The PA CTF works to prevent child abuse and neglect in the Commonwealth.

Approximately 60,000 additional people have gotten a REAL ID since June, raising the adoption rate from 19.4% to 20.2%.

Highway and Bridge Program

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

Mr. Rebert pointed out a chart comparing the ideal Lowest Life Cycle Cost (LLCC) to actual planned projects. He said that PennDOT strives to attain the LLCC to get the most use from the budgeted funds.

There has been a decrease in the five-year average of roadway fatalities in the past ten years, but a slight increase in the past two years. The highest amount was 1,265 for the 2010-2014 average, to 1,157 for 2018-2022. The lowest point was 1,141 for 2016-2020. PennDOT will continue to

try to decrease that number by addressing problem areas with Crash Cluster Lists, and programming improvement projects in those areas.

Mr. Rebert stated that the mild winter produced \$55 million in cost savings, which went to replenishing supplies like rock salt and road maintenance projects. Inflation has caused supply prices to increase sharply. Rock salt rose from \$58.33 per ton in 2013 to \$76.17 a ton in 2022. The price of asphalt and gasoline has doubled since 2020 but stabilized early this year.

For project letting, 153 of the 178 projects in the second quarter of 2023 were let on time. For project budgets, 50% have been within estimate. The bids have been very competitive; however, the higher costs are due to inflation.

81% of construction projects in the first quarter of 2023 were completed on time, above the goal of 80%, but down from the usual above 95% average. This is because projects are not usually scheduled to be completed in the winter months, so these contracts were generally delayed projects.

For the last four quarters, 171 out of 520 construction projects exceeded the 3% bid overrun, resulting in \$51.6 million extra cost. Four projects accounted for \$18.6 million of the total. The overall statewide overrun was 3.10%. Excluding the top 4 overrun projects, the overall statewide overrun would be 1.98%

Multimodal Transportation

Deputy Secretary for Multimodal Transportation, Ms. Meredith Biggica, gave a short presentation.

PennDOT is finalizing a study on the long-term sustainability of the Shared Ride Program. The pandemic had a strong negative effect on many shared ride systems, and the program is facing long-term funding challenges. The study will look at the current program and make recommendations for future models. The study is hoped to be finalized in late Fall 2023.

The Rail Freight Grant Program application window closed on September 1, 2023, with 26 applications totaling over \$50 million. She hopes to have recommended projects for review by the STC in December.

The PennDOT Multimodal Grant Application window will open September 25, 2023, and close November 10, 2023. This will be the first time the department will allow applicants will to cure administrative deficiencies in their application.

Office of Planning

Deputy Secretary for Planning, Mr. Larry Shifflet, gave an update from the Office of Planning.

PennDOT applied to seven federal grants in the June-August 2023 period, totaling over \$555 million. In 2023, PennDOT has applied for eleven grants, totaling over \$1.7 billion. The I-83 South Bridge project and the Karns Crossing Bridge project in District 10-0 were two of the seven projects submitted in the June-August timeframe. Mr. Shifflet noted that the applications took a lot of time and effort from the consultant and district personnel and thanked all those who helped with these submissions.

Every June, PennDOT submits a Certified Milage Report to FHWA. Without that report, PennDOT would not collect federal funds. The report is a yearlong project, and PennDOT has never and will never miss that date.

This year saw the highest August Redistribution in history. Pennsylvania received \$460.4 million, the third largest in the nation behind California and Texas.

Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)

Ms. Jody Holton, Transportation Advisory Committee Chair, gave a short update. The Truck Parking Study and the Local Match Requirements Study have kicked off, and she will continue to keep the STC updated as they progress.

WORKING SESSION:

District 10-0 Presentation

District Executive, Mr. Brian Allen, P.E., and Assistant District Executive of Design, Ms. Alice Hammond, P.E., gave a presentation on PennDOT Engineering District 10-0.

Mr. Allen began by explaining that District 10 is made up of 5 counties (Armstrong, Butler, Clarion, Indiana, and Jefferson) and is part of three planning organizations (Southwestern Planning Commission (SPC), Northwest Commission, and the North Central Regional Planning and Development Commission). The district has approximately 7,000 lane miles and over 1,600 bridges.

The district's budget is approximately \$92 million a year, with \$73 million going to SPC, \$10 million to North Central, and \$9 million to Northwest. The district let 40 contracts costing \$146.7 million in 2021, and 35 contracts costing \$189.5 million in 2022.

District 10 has historically prioritized the high-level and high-volume roads, with the remainder going to the lower-level networks. The Interstate and other major roads have a high ride quality, above 89%. The lowest level roads, with less than 2,000 daily traffic, are 62% in poor condition, higher than the 51.6% target. A large portion of these poor condition roads are known as "pancake" roads, where the road was originally built without a base, and has been seal coated repeatedly. The district estimates that it would cost \$36.1 million to bring these roads to Fair quality, and \$47 million to get them to Good quality.

Ms. Hammond said that the National Highway System bridges are 19.64% Good quality, with a goal of 25%, and 4.3% Poor, with a target of 7.5%. The district is on course to meet its goals in

2025. Local bridges are 30.75% Good, with a goal of 33%, and 8.67% Poor, with a target of 10%. Local bridge maintenance is anticipated to lose pace with conditions by 2025, causing an increase in Poor-quality bridges.

Five hundred seventy-one (571) bridges (35% of inventory) have at least one element that could become poor during the next inspection. One hundred thirty-two (132) of those are on the NHS network. Ms. Hammond focused on the I-80 Clarion River Bridge and the I-79 Harmony Northbound (NB) & Southbound (SB) Bridges as examples of this, all of which were built in the early 1960s, are fracture critical, and are rated as Fair condition.

Ms. Moon-Sirianni asked how the issues with these bridges would be addressed. Ms. Hammond responded that they would be replaced, and that planning on the Harmony bridges has already started. Mr. Allen said that they are planning ahead, so as the two bridges get worse, the District will be ready to replace them.

Ms. Hammond spoke about the proposed Karns Crossing bridge replacement. Inflation has increased the cost from the 2020 estimate of \$52 million to the current \$74.5 million. Currently, only \$37 million is on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for the project, and the district has submitted for a Federal Discretionary Grant.

The fatality trend for District 10-0 has shown a steady decrease over the past 20 years due to safety initiatives. Lane departure crashes makeup approximately 64% of the district's fatalities. The district has emphasized systemic safety improvements such as high friction surface treatments to keep motorists on the road. The district is applying the treatment to data-driven areas on arterial and connector networks and will be adding additional signage and delineation.

On US 422 from Kittanning to Indiana, a 2007 study determined there was no need to expand capacity, but there were significant safety concerns. Three projects have been completed in the Kittanning area, with three more in the engineering or construction phases.

One of these US 422 projects is the Margaret Road Intersection, a significant realignment. The project will include a new bridge, a new culvert, and an old bridge and roadway removal. Construction started in Fall 2022, is scheduled to finish in Summer 2025 and will cost \$28.6 million. Also planned for this roadway is the Dunbar Dip Realignment Project, currently in the Preliminary Engineering phase. This is a straightening of the road with a current estimate of \$37.8 million.

Ms. Hammond spoke about the Gateway 228 Corridor, from the Beaver County line to Route 8. There has been \$184 million in improvement projects either completed or currently under construction in the corridor since 2015. The district was able to get a \$20 million grant in 2018, and a \$25 million grant in 2020. A major widening project on SR 3020 Freedom Road and a safety improvement on Ball's Bend are underway, both expected to be completed in 2025. The

Three Degree Road intersection has seen significant development, and there is a project to increase safety, widen the road, and improve access, estimated for completion in 2026.

Mr. Carroll said that many other districts share challenges such as the budget shortfalls faced by District 10-0, and that it is the challenge of the Secretary to advance policy that will generate additional revenue while being sensitive to the needs of the public. The preservation of the money that was going to the State Police was critical.

COMMISSIONERS REPORT:

None

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Representative Struzzi said he was thrilled to see the 422 and 228 corridor projects moving forward. He was also alarmed at the inflation costs. He noted the need for the Transportation Committee in the House and Senate to be aware of it, especially at the same time that bridge conditions deteriorate.

Mr. Carroll responded that it emphasizes the need for federal money, such as the infrastructure bill that provided approximately \$700 million for roads and bridges. He said there are also challenges with locally-owned bridges, and that the federal money makes a difference, but it isn't the answer to the problem.

OTHER BUSINESS:

None.

NEXT MEETING:

The next STC quarterly meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, December 13, 2023.**

ADJOURNMENT:

ON A MOTION by Mr. James Kingsborough and seconded by Mr. Ron Drnevich, the STC quarterly meeting was adjourned at 11:50 a.m.