

PENNSYLVANIA STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
BUSINESS MEETING
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA
DECEMBER 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:

Secretary Ron Drnevich convened the quarterly business meeting of the State Transportation Commission (STC) at 10:00 a.m. on December 13, 2023, in Harrisburg, PA.

ROLL CALL:

Commissioners Present:

1. Honorable Ron Drnevich
2. Honorable James Kingsborough
3. Honorable Karen Michael, P.E.
4. Honorable Paige Willan
5. Honorable Wayne Langerholc, Jr., Mr. Nolan Ritchie, Alternate Present

Commissioners Present on the Phone:

1. Honorable Sharon Knoll
2. Honorable Kerry Benninghoff, Mr. Josiah Shelley, Alternate Present
3. Honorable Marty Flynn, Mr. Justin Gensimore, Alternate Present

Commissioners Not Present

1. Honorable Michael B. Carroll
2. Honorable Ed Neilson

MINUTES:

ON A MOTION by Mr. Kingsborough, seconded by Ms. Willan, and unanimously approved, the September 13, 2023, STC business meeting minutes were accepted.

CHAIR'S REMARKS:

Mr. Drnevich gave a brief statement of appreciation for the STC. Mr. Kingsborough announced that today would be Mr. Drnevich's last meeting, as he is retiring. He noted Mr. Drnevich's mentorship and dedication to the role of STC Secretary.

Mr. Shifflet asked members to sign a resolution to honor of Mr. Drnevich's 11 years of service, not only to the STC, but also to the Public Private Partnership Board, Keystone Funding Coalition, and many others related to transportation.

12-YEAR TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM:

Deputy Secretary for Planning, Mr. Larry Shifflet, gave an update on the 12-Year Transportation Program. Between August 26 and November 24, 2023, there were 1,396 program adjustments, including 503 additions, 816 changes, and 77 removals. These changes represent a \$646,732,176 increase.

Mr. Shifflet highlighted the Centre County MPO and the independent county Wayne County, who each had an increase in funds through August redistribution as discussed in the previous meeting.

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

2023 RFAP and RTAP Program:

Deputy Secretary of Multimodal, Ms. Meredith Biggica, presented the 2023 Rail Freight Assistance Program (RFAP) and the Rail Transportation Assistance Program (RTAP) projects, 25 projects totaling approximately \$42.5 million dollars. Ms. Angela Watson added that this reflects approximately \$130 million of projects in total, with a 70% share coming from the State. The projects would be enhancing 90 miles of track.

ON A MOTION by Ms. Knoll and seconded by Mr. Kingsborough, the 2023 RFAP and RTAP Program was approved.

REPORTS

Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)

Transportation Advisory Committee chair Ms. Jody Holton gave a brief update. The TAC approved two studies, which will stand for themselves later in the meeting. The next study topics are being prioritized and we will be ready to move forward in the new year.

Ms. Holton also said there had been discussion about the implementation of the TAC studies, and the TAC is looking at ways to develop a communication plan in addition to the scope of the study itself to ensure that the study is widely distributed.

Executive Secretary

Mr. Shifflet announced that Ms. Moon-Sirianni is also retiring and gave thanks to her for all her efforts during her ten months in the Executive Secretary role and 37 and a half total years of service.

Executive Deputy Secretary, Ms. Cheryl Moon-Sirianni gave thanks to the STC and PennDOT for all the support during her time as an Executive in District 11 through the current day.

Ms. Moon-Sirianni continued thanking everybody for moving forward with some of the initiatives like design build best value making the department more efficient moving forward.

Administrative/Budget

Deputy Secretary for Administration, Mr. Corey Pellington, highlighted several sections from the Administrative/Budget report.

Mr. Pellington said there has been an increase in emergency requests for facility repairs in the last year. We have requested an increase in facilities funding in our Program Revision Request (PRR) to the Governor's Budget Office for next year's budget.

Mr. Pellington noted the Bureau of Innovations has introduced a new challenge for next year's High School Innovations program. This year's subject will focus on strategic ways to reconnect previously separated neighborhoods while incorporating neighborhood needs. Submissions are due January 26, 2024. There will be regional rounds, and those winners will appear in Harrisburg with the results in March.

Mr. Pellington stated the Bureau of Equal Opportunity (BEO) has been working to increase progress in meeting the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) goals. There was a slight overage of .3%, but they are still behind the tri-annual 2021-2023 goal by 1.63%. BEO submitted the new methodology to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for the tri-annual period of 2024 to 2026. The new overall goal is 12.56%. The market sector goal for professional services, which does include the Bureau of Office Services, is 29.19%, and the goal for construction is 9.62%.

Mr. Pellington noted that the Human Resource Office will have a new engineering intern classification in place for when the summer employment program is announced. This will allow for more competitive recruitment of engineers.

Mr. Pellington highlighted the Winter Maintenance Program, noting the 181 filled temporary equipment operator positions out of the 956 authorized positions for the 2023/2024 winter season. Employee recruitment efforts continue, and a new on-site mobile testing program has begun to enhance recruitment efforts.

Driver and Vehicle Services

Deputy Secretary for Driver and Vehicle Services (DVS), Ms. Kara Templeton, highlighted several items from the report.

Ms. Templeton started her report by noting that DVS held multiple press events highlighting teen driver safety, calling attention to the challenges facing teen drivers, the Annual School Bus Safety Poster contest that kids participated in reminding us of the important relationship between students and their school bus drivers, and Operation Safe Stop to raise public awareness about the consequences of improper passing of school buses and reduce occurrences.

Ms. Templeton said DVS worked with the Department of State to implement Automatic Voter Registration (AVR), or “Motor Voter”, enhancements; when a driver gets their license picture taken, they are asked if they want to register to vote. The new enhancement is that you are now registered to vote unless you decide to opt-out.

Ms. Templeton noted that dealer and miscellaneous motor vehicle plate reissuance of over 87,000 plates has been completed.

Ms. Templeton concluded her report noting that we continue to monitor the issuance of Real ID products. It is estimated that 25% will be getting Real ID before the federal compliance date of May 7, 2025. Pennsylvania is currently at 20.6% participation, approximately 2.1 million people.

Mr. Drnevich commented on how many people still try to go around school buses and asked if there was any progress on cameras. Ms. Templeton said that there was legislation being worked on.

Highway and Bridge Program

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

In the last quarter, 107 projects were let for \$851 million. The estimate for the end of the calendar year is 600 projects, at \$2.8-2.9 billion.

Inflation is still an issue, with rock salt prices still increasing. The price per ton has gone from \$65.70 in 2021, to \$76.17 in 2022, to \$80.10 in 2023. Inflation is starting to level off, but it affects everything from blacktop to steel prices. Bid estimates are still catching up to inflation. Training is being offered to the Districts to better account for inflation.

Key projects Let in Q3 of 2023 were the Central Bayfront Parkway Multimodal in District 1 for \$112 million, I-83 East Shore Section 3 in District 8 for \$155 million, and CSVT Structures South Section in District 3 for \$106 million.

Ms. Willan asked if the inaccurate estimate was due to inflation or poor estimation. Mr. Rebert said that it is some of both. The issue is felt the most in multi-year projects, where the amount of inflation was not known at the start.

Mr. Drnevich asked if the federal money would be able to get them over the hump. Mr. Rebert said he doesn't have metrics for that, but he feels comfortable with current bridge and road IRI numbers and expects the poor ratings to increase in the next 7-10 years.

Multimodal Transportation

Deputy Secretary for Multimodal Transportation, Ms. Meredith Biggica, gave an update.

Ms. Biggica said that after publishing the report, the Scranton-NYC and Keystone corridors were accepted into the Corridor Identification and Development (Corridor ID) Program and will be getting up to \$500,000 to create a statement of work for the service development plan. The Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority's Reading-New York corridor was also accepted.

The Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) announced the Federal-State partnership Inner City Passenger Rail grant, from which Pennsylvania will be receiving \$143 million to support a second Pennsylvanian line.

Mr. Kingsborough asked if there was news on jet fuel tax increases. Ms. Biggica said there is no news yet, but it is being discussed.

Mr. Drnevich asked about the Pennsylvanian passenger rail line. Ms. Biggica responded that they had executed their agreement with Norfolk-Southern to put a second line in, hopefully by 2026. A number of capital projects need to be performed before the second line can be added.

Mr. Drnevich asked about potential ridership for the second Pennsylvanian. Ms. Biggica responded that the Harrisburg-Philadelphia Keystone line was at 70% ridership pre-pandemic, and the Pennsylvanian was nearly at 100%.

Ms. Willan expressed concern about high rail prices resulting in many users taking buses for intercity travel. Ms. Biggica said that they partner with AMTRAK to set prices and also help to subsidize the Keystone line, approximately \$20-30 million annually. For rail lines that go through other states, there are cost-sharing agreements with those states. They are aware of the pricing issues, especially during the holidays.

Ms. Willan noted that Philadelphia is very focused on pedestrian, cyclist, and traffic fatalities, and asked what they are doing in that regard. Ms. Biggica said that they are working with District 6, who is doing a study on I-95/Roosevelt Boulevard. They are also trying to get an extension for the Roosevelt Boulevard Speed Camera program.

Ms. Willan asked about the expansion of the speed camera program to other roads. Ms. Teresa Wagner said that the effort was currently in the Senate and undergoing some expansion. Ms. Biggica stated they are working with the legislature on parking-separated bike lanes.

Mr. Kingsborough asked for an update on high-speed rail. Ms. Biggica said that there were corridors identified during the Corridor ID program, some of which were for high-speed rail.

Office of Planning

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

Five applications were submitted for federal grants, totaling \$517 million. The I-83 South Bridge application was for \$500 million. It is expected to hear back on the applications in early 2024. Since the September meeting, eight projects have been awarded, totaling \$55.2 million. An additional eight Safe Streets For All projects were awarded after the report was printed for another \$27.9 million, for a total of \$83.1 million.

Mr. Shifflet noted that the U.S. Congress is operating under a continuing resolution, and the approximately \$22 million in emergency relief funds for the I-95 collapse is tied up in appropriations.

National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Program

Ms. Natasha Fackler, Infrastructure Implementation Coordinator, gave an update on the NEVI program. Pennsylvania is due to get \$171.5 million during the five years of the program. In August, PennDOT gave conditional awards for 56 projects totaling approximately \$34.8 million. Contract negotiations with those groups are ongoing, with one first-round project under construction. Per Federal rule, all NEVI funds must go to the Alternative Fuel Corridors (AFC).

The second round of applications, Round 1A, has begun. The online portal was opened and is accepting proposals. The round is expected to award approximately \$22 million to build out the AFC network. Submissions close on January 26, 2024.

Ms. Fackler said there are over 4,000 public plugs in over 1,600 locations in the state. Mr. Drnevich asked if there was any issue with the electric companies providing power to all those locations. Ms. Fackler was unaware of any issues. She said that fast charging stations usually carried a fee, but many level 2 charging stations are provided as an amenity by the location.

Ms. Fackler said that PennDOT tracks electric vehicle registrations, with 60,000 fully electric vehicles (EVs), with 34,000 plug-in hybrid EVs. They are on track for 1% of the overall Pennsylvania fleet to be electric in January-February.

Mr. Drnevich asked if there was any progress on replacing the gas tax funding for EVs. Ms. Wagner said that flat fees at registration are being considered in the House, but the fee number is constantly changing, and that a recent suggestion was \$100, increasing \$25 each year to a cap of \$200 in 2029, which would then raise with the Consumer Price Index.

Mr. Drnevich said that number was not nearly close to the 60-cent/gallon gas tax. Ms. Wagner agreed and said that there are still many amendments being made to the proposal. Mr. Drnevich said there's nothing national, and that every state has this problem. Ms. Wagner said that the conversations will continue, and that the Senate bill number is Bill 656.

WORKING SESSION:

Truck Parking Study

Mr. Tom Phelan of Gannett Fleming gave a presentation on the *Expanding Truck Parking in Pennsylvania* study. A range of factors including hours-of-service regulations and supply chain

needs cause trucks to have to park on highway shoulders instead of at rest facilities which are often overwhelmed. There were two primary goals of the study: to create a framework that identifies and prioritizes the corridors most in need and that the framework can be reusable in the future.

Mr. Phelan gave a short overview of the corridor grading system and identified corridors in need. Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, some segments of the Turnpike, I-78 near the New Jersey line, and Harrisburg area segments of I-83 are the highest priority areas. He brought special attention to the Philadelphia area, due to its special lack of parking facilities and narrow highway shoulders. The I-78 highway into New Jersey is an example of the interconnected nature of roadways, as this stems from unmet need in New Jersey, which in turn springs from unmet need in New York City.

The study also looked at finding specific locations to create or enhance parking facilities. The evaluation criteria included parcel size, distance to designated networks, compatible zoning, and whether the parcel is a brownfield redevelopment opportunity.

The study focuses on two types of facility: truck stops and pooled parking within industrial parks, as they are suited to handle long and short-term parking, as well as staging and emergency operations.

Mr. Phelan listed a few potential locations, specifically the Bellwether District redevelopment in Philadelphia and the Fairless Hills site north of Philadelphia; both are large parcels currently undergoing redevelopment but still need to be built. There is an opportunity to connect with the developer, Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), and county officials to get parcels carved out for truck parking facilities.

The study contains 19 recommendations, split into six areas: Cost of Real Estate, Availability of Appropriate Sites, State and Federal Policy, Community/Quality of Life Concerns, Municipal/Regulatory, and Institutional Initiatives.

Mr. Kingsborough asked how the truck parking sites would be funded. Mr. Phelan said that is dependent on who builds and finances construction. A privately owned stop may charge per night or have contracts with trucking companies. If public funds are involved, then by law, the site cannot charge for parking.

Mr. Kingsborough asked if trailer swap sites were included in the study. Mr. Phelan said that they had found that many older truck stops have become trailer storage areas. These were previously free parking areas that have slowly turned into longer-term storage. Ad-hoc sites could not be included.

Mr. Kingsborough asked about pollution from idling trucks. Mr. Phelan says that is something that could be written in. If PennDOT or USDOT were involved, it could be part of the requirements. Anti-idle technologies for truck stops could be part of a USDOT technology grant in the future.

Ms. Willan commended the recommendation that Regional Planning Organizations (RPOs) be involved in the process. Development is intensely local and works best when all parties work together. Mr. Phelan added that the Port of Philadelphia is a big player as well, due to their staging needs.

Ms. Willan asked how truckers would know where parking is during their travel, and if that was considered. Mr. Phelan said that was not a piece of the study, but truck dispatch often coordinates parking. PennDOT and the Turnpike are already engaged in ways to get real-time information to truckers about parking availability. A parking reservation system would be an ideal technology.

Mr. Phelan explained that drivers have two clocks when they start driving each day: a 14-hour on-duty timer, and an 11-hour drive-time timer. When one of those clocks expires, the driver has to stop for the day. Drivers can have an amount of conveyance time, in extenuating circumstances. Mr. Kingsborough asked if there were any driving teams. Mr. Phelan said that there are, with husband/wife teams becoming more common, but even with two shifts, there's still a need for a rest period.

Mr. Drnevich asked what the next steps are. Mr. Phelan said that a real estate developer saw the report on the news and got in contact. The people who want to be involved are getting in touch.

Mr. Drnevich mentioned that there are more trailers than tractors, with some warehouses holding hundreds of trailers at a time. Mr. Phelan said that is a very specific subsector in trucking, Less than Truck Load (LTL). This type of driver may drive 4-5 hours to another facility and back to their origin point on the same day. The trucks used for this do not have sleeper units.

Mr. Drnevich asked again what the next steps are. Mr. Phelan said that they are waiting for an opportunity. There are proposed federal bills with dedicated funding, specifically truck parking facilities. Making deals with neighboring states to fund locations on the borders is also a possibility.

Mr. Shifflet said that this report puts us in a good position moving forward with any opportunity that may arise. PennDOT will continue working with their freight team and legislative partners in Pennsylvania and Washington D.C.

Mr. Brian Hare said that he has already formed a small group on this subject within PennDOT, and based on the recommendations in the study, should begin drafting applications in advance of future funding opportunities.

ON A MOTION by Mr. Kingsborough and seconded by Ms. Willan, the *Expanding Truck Parking in Pennsylvania* study was approved.

Local Match Challenges Study

Ms. Tracey Vernon from Vernon Land Use gave a presentation on the *Addressing Municipal Concerns to Participating in Competitive Transportation Grant Programs Study*. She thanked

the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, who helped administer a survey that for the study. 718 municipalities responded, a 28% response rate.

The study's objectives were to identify state constraints limiting flexibility in waiving or reducing local match, understand challenges with tax-exempt real estate, understand municipal capacity limiting grant funding, identify best practices, and develop recommendations to assist municipalities.

The study's twelve main findings can be grouped under three categories: Grant Requirements, Municipal Financial Constraints, and Municipal Capacity Constraints.

Grant requirement issues found were as follows: Match requirements are stringent. Application processes are complex. Grant application windows are short, and Grant notices are easy to miss.

Municipal Financial Constraints found were: Many municipalities have large amounts of tax-exempt/discounted real estate. Many county tax assessments need to be updated. Revenue from some funding sources is limited by population density. Industrial/Commercial tax bases are declining in many areas. Socioeconomic trends diminish the fiscal capacity of local governments. Municipal expenses are increasing.

Municipal capacity constraints found were a need for in-house technical capacity and multi-municipal cooperation, which must be strengthened. Local governments often need more capital improvement planning.

The study had ten recommendations: Adopt a flexible match policy for state grants and modify program guidelines, Consider local match waiver options, Establish a State program to match federal grants, Seek public-sector/non-profit match support, Establish a local match loan fund, Promote and incentivize multi-municipal coordination, Build local capacity through technical assistance, Consider property tax modifications, Adopt additional municipal taxes/fees, Encourage county-implemented transportation funding initiatives.

Ms. Willan asked for clarification on what the tax-free real estate specifically was. Ms. Vernon said that a lot of it was state forests, parks, Department of Conservation of Natural Resources (DCNR) game lands, and federal forests, but it also includes government buildings in county seats. Some proposed legislation has been looking at increasing the share that local municipalities get.

Mr. Drnevich asked how small municipalities get funds. Ms. Vernon said that depends on the funding source and area of the State. Very small municipalities will rely heavily on the MPO/RPO, but an MPO/RPO may not have the capacity to help every community, and many are not able to apply for grants. Ms. Michael said that we expect a lot of municipalities, but some don't even have physical offices.

ON A MOTION by Ms. Karen Michael and seconded by Ms. Paige Willan, the *Addressing Municipal Challenges to Participating in Competitive Transportation Grant Programs Study* was approved.

COMMISSIONERS REPORT:

Mr. Kingsborough asked Mr. Funkhouser of Michael Baker International, if there was any update on the I-81 corridor study. Mr. Funkhouser said that a recent study was completed by the Franklin County MPO, looking at which segments of the interstate would reach capacity and segments where pavement was beginning to fail, and started to set priorities.

Mr. Shifflet said a study conducted by Harrisburg MPO, in coordination with Franklin and Lebanon county MPOs, looked at I-81 from the Maryland border to the I-78 split. Franklin took that information to develop priority areas. He said that conversations are ongoing as they get into the meat of the 2025 12-Year Program update.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mr. Jonathan Crist, Esq. from Hershey, gave a presentation to the STC about the Highway Occupancy Permit (HOP) and Commercial Applications process. The Linlow Governor Crossing Project went through a year of hearings by the Judicial Use Board in Derry Township. The large development project would have increased traffic on this already overburdened 322/Fishburne Road intersection, and barriers would have been placed, blocking off the existing properties. The project was eventually declined by Derry Township. Mr. Crist gave recommendations for the HOP process based on representing local stakeholders. Mr. Shifflet said they would investigate the issue.

OTHER BUSINESS:

The proposed 2024 meeting dates are February 28 in Harrisburg, May 15 at a to-be-determined location, August 14 at a to-be-determined location, and December 18 in Harrisburg.

ON A MOTION by Ms. Willan and seconded by Mr. Kingsborough, the meeting dates were approved.

NEXT MEETING:

The next STC quarterly meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, February 28, 2024.**

ADJOURNMENT:

ON A MOTION by Ms. Michael and seconded by Mr. Kingsborough, the STC quarterly meeting was adjourned at 12:17 p.m.