

**SOUTHERN ALLEGHENIES
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

RURAL TRANSPORTATION COORDINATING COMMITTEE

February 24, 2021

10:00 AM

Zoom

Virtual Meeting

ACTION SUMMARY

The following are the major actions taken by the Rural Transportation Coordination Committee (RTCC) at its regular meeting held on February 24, 2021, on Zoom.

1. Approved the December 2, 2020, RTCC meeting minutes as presented.
2. Approved sending the RPO funding initiatives support letter to the local legislators as presented.

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MEETING MINUTES

I. Welcome

The following members were present at the meeting:

- Commissioner Randy Bunch, Fulton County
- Commissioner Jeff Thomas, Huntingdon County
- Commissioner Colleen Dawson, Somerset County
- Frank Hampton, PennDOT Central Office
- Thomas Prestash, PennDOT District 9-0
- Steve Howsare, SAP&DC
- Brandon Carson, SAP&DC

Others in attendance included:

- Carl Walker Metzger, Pennsylvania State Representative
- Michele Ivory, Senator Judy Ward's Office
- Tonya Clark, Senator Wayne Langerholc, Jr.'s Office
- Ron Klink, Former U.S. Representative
- Commissioner Gerald Walker, Somerset County
- Commissioner Pamela Tokar-Ickes, Somerset County
- Gene Porochniak, FHWA
- Vince Greenland, PennDOT District 9-0
- David Lybarger, PennDOT District 9-0
- Anne Stich, PennDOT District 9-0
- Chris Hull, PennDOT District 9-0
- Jim French, French Engineering
- Kari Shedlock, French Engineering
- Brandon Peters, SAP&DC
- Matthew Bjorkman, SAP&DC
- Zachary Lee, SAP&DC
- Janice Streightiff, SAP&DC

Each participant received a meeting packet that included:

- Agenda
- December 16, 2020 RTCC Meeting Minutes
- Draft RPO State Transportation Funding Letter
- Southern Alleghenies RPO FY 2021-2024 TIP Adjustments
- Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) Grant Program
- FY 2021 PennDOT Multimodal Transportation Fund (MTF) Projects
- Southern Alleghenies RPO LRTP 2042 Development Schedule
- Southern Alleghenies RPO Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Timeline

II. Review and Approval of the December 2, 2020 RTCC Meeting Minutes

Tom Prestash welcomed the committee to the meeting and Brandon Peters conducted roll call. Tom asked the committee to review the December 2, 2020, RTCC meeting minutes included in the meeting packet.

With no further discussion, Commissioner Jeff Thomas made a motion to approve the December 2, 2020, RTCC meeting minutes as presented. Commissioner Colleen Dawson seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

III. Transportation Funding

Tom noted that over the last few meetings the committee has been discussing the need for transportation funding. It was suggested by the committee that a letter voicing the RPO's concerns be drafted. Tom noted that due to the effects of COVID-19, there has been an estimated \$500-600M in lost revenue. In FY 2021, PennDOT had to hold back construction lets due to cash flow issues. Recently a \$407M Federal COVID Relief Bill was passed that will allow the construction lets to begin again. Tom also noted that other efforts are being looked at including the PA Pathways Program, which would toll some bridges and expressways in the state. None of these bridges are in the Southern Alleghenies Region. Brandon Carson reviewed the RPO letter with the committee. A draft of the letter was included in the meeting packet. The letter states that the RPO supports the State's funding initiatives. The floor was opened for comment. Commissioner Jeff Thomas said that he concurs with letter. Representative Carl Metzger voiced his concerns with the letter stating that he felt it was advocating for a tax increase. A large portion of the funding goes to mass transit and this is a rural area. Commissioner Jeff Thomas responded that the letter is looking for all kinds of alternative funding, not just a tax increase. A solution needs to be found. You need good infrastructure for the economy to thrive.

With no further discussion, Commissioner Jeff Thomas made a motion to approve sending the RPO funding initiatives support letter as presented. Commissioner Colleen Dawson seconded the motion. PennDOT abstained from the vote. All others were in favor. The motion was passed.

Although not a voting member of the committee, Representative Carl Metzgar went on record that he was not in favor of the letter being sent.

As an action item, Brandon Peters will send information on the PA Pathways Program along with other ideas that are being put forth as a funding option to the RTCC members.

IV. FY 2021-2024 TIP Modifications and Amendments

David Lybarger reviewed the FY 2021-2024 TIP modifications with the committee answering any questions they had. There were no amendments requiring a vote.

V. Southern Fulton I-70 Interchange

Tom was contacted by Joe Gilbert, who is a developer and Maryland official, and by Maryland Department of Transportation concerning the development of a business park being located on the Maryland border. They would like an interchange placed in Pennsylvania to access the business park in Maryland. He just wanted to make the committee aware. They have reached out to stakeholders in Fulton County who asked what the process would be. PennDOT can work through the process of how to get an interchange with FHWA but there are no funding resources available for the project. The developer has not done any engineering to determine location, etc. and our TIP cannot sustain a project of this magnitude. They recommended the interchange be located in Maryland. Commissioner Randy Bunch added that he discussed this with someone at Judy Ward's office and they recommended the State of Maryland do a study on the project before looking at it any further. If this is an industrial park it will create significant traffic through Hancock causing a safety issue. Tom added that it is the responsibility of the developer to conduct a traffic impact study and develop a plan. The RPO would need to see if there were any cost benefits before considering the project. Michele Ivory added that Mr. Gilbert is the Manager of the town of Hancock and currently lives in Fulton County. He contacted Senator Ward's office to request a meeting with the legislators and provided them with several support letters including one from Fulton County. They explained the process to him and made him aware of the funding situation in Pennsylvania. Michele received an email today about an article in the Morgan Messenger that said he has been in contact with Chris Van Hollen's office, and they have pledged to have project put at the top of FHWA's priority list. One of the past issues with the project is that FHWA guidelines require interchanges to be three miles apart and there are already two interchanges there. Frank recommended they hand the project off to Maryland Department of Transportation. Tom will keep the committee informed.

VI. INFRA Grant Program

Brandon Carson informed the committee that the USDOT announced the opening of the FY 2021 round of Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) Grant funding a week ago. There is \$889M in funding available and applications are due March 19th. Brandon Peters reached out to the Somerset County Commissioners to discuss the possibility of applying for the remaining miles on Rt. 219 and the Commissioners and their consultant met yesterday to discuss it. Brandon Peters reviewed the funding requirements of the grant program with the committee. Tom added that PennDOT received word from the Maryland State Highway Officials and they agreed that they will work together on consultant selection. There will be cost sharing between Maryland and Pennsylvania. Tom has a meeting with Maryland to discuss the nine statements of interest covering the project from Meyersdale to where Maryland stopped about a mile from I-68 on March 10th and a short list of consultants will be determined. Those consultants will then submit a more detailed proposal by April 1st with oral presentations on April 29th. The ranking of proposals will be on May 12th with a Preliminary Engineering (PE) notice to proceed on August 15th. The PE phase of the project can take up to three years. Tom said he will send the timeline out to the committee. After reviewing the timeline, it was agreed that they may not be ready for this round of INFRA Grant funding, but they want to have a schedule in place and be prepared for the next round. The project will need to be fully funded to receive Environmental Clearance from FHWA. The PE will also need to be completed before submitting the application. They would also like to put together a timeline for construction and milestones for applying for an INFRA Grant. The PE will provide most of the information needed. Vince explained the process noting the first step is to do an alternative analysis, a lot of which has already been completed and will just need updated. At the conclusion of that you would have a preferred alternative that then has to be studied further to get the record of decision, which is the conclusion of the Environmental Clearance. The information needed for the INFRA Grant should be included in the alternative analysis. They previously discussed the RPO being the applicant but have since discovered that the RPO is not eligible, but States and joint States are eligible. Commissioner Dawson asked if Pennsylvania was willing to commit to the project with Maryland. Tom responded that there have been ongoing discussions on the topic, but he will have to discuss that with the Secretary. Commissioner Walker asked if SAP&DC could pull a meeting together with Senator Edwards and the stakeholders in Maryland just to keep an open line of communication and make sure everyone understands the status of the project. He feels the INFRA Grant is the right funding for the project. Tom and Brandon will work together on this and arrange a meeting. The next meeting with Maryland is on Thursday.

Ron Klink, a former U.S. Representative, added that they have been trying to figure out how to get more funding into Pennsylvania for some time. There have been efforts to try to get the new administration to complete the entire ADHS system. They have been in communication with Steve Ricchetti, a Counselor to the President who is familiar with the project, and he has asked for additional information. The new administration wants to invest in infrastructure. One of the problems is that there is one billion dollars in funds to complete the ADHS system that is allocated to various states. It is hard to get funding for

one of these projects when previously awarded funding is unspent. Over the last two years, there has been \$100M per year in ADHS funding. Pennsylvania didn't qualify for funding the first year and expects to see \$4.5M to \$5M this year. Next year, the plan is to increase the request to \$250M for the ADHS and then increase it by \$50 every year.

VII. FY 2021 PennDOT Multimodal Transportation Fund

Brandon Peters reviewed the five applications submitted within the RPO with the committee. There were three bicycle pedestrian projects and two highway and bridge projects. More funding is dedicated to highway and bridge projects than bicycle and pedestrian so if a project qualifies for highway and bridge funding that is the way to go. The RPO's comments have been submitted and Brandon will keep the committee updated on the status of the applications as information is received.

VIII. 2042 Southern Alleghenies LRTP

Matt Bjorkman has been working with French Engineering to identify potential HISP Projects to be included on the LRTP. Jim French informed the committee they have used a data driven approach to identify 13 primary candidates with one alternate. The projects are scattered among the counties and cover several types of issues. They developed cost estimates for the identified improvements and started a cost benefits analysis. The first draft is complete and being reviewed. The total cost estimate for the 14 potential projects would be \$11M. Upon completion, there will be some projects with feasible improvements and a benefit cost ratio greater than one as required by HSIP in a variety of locations and costs. He is now looking to schedule a meeting with the steering committee and PennDOT to discuss the benefit cost analysis. They met with PennDOT Central Office staff last week to be sure everything looked correct.

Matt reviewed the upcoming milestones with the committee. He also reviewed the county priorities of unfunded projects back to 2013. The goal is to get comments finalized by the April 21st RTTC meeting.

IX. 2021 Southern Alleghenies Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan

This plan is expected to be adopted in October. The steering committee is currently being put together with representatives from each county and Roy Gothie, PennDOT's Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator. They are going to build off the 2016 plan making it more specific than the last. It is helpful for grant applicants to be able to say that the project was identified in the plan.

X. 2020 Southern Alleghenies Trail Report

Matt reviewed the trail report with the committee answering any questions they had. He noted the effect of COVID-19 on trail usage. The report was sent out to the committee and is also available on the SAP&DC website. Anyone who wants additional data can contact Matt. This data is also sent out to the six counties in the region. He plans to deploy counters at Nature Works Trail Park in Blair County and two at Quemahoning Trail in Somerset County soon,

XI. Other Business

There was no other business. Tom offered his condolences on the passing of Brandon Peters' mother.

XII. Adjournment

Commissioner Randy Bunch made a motion to adjourn at 11:23 AM.

NOTE: The next meeting of the RTCC is scheduled for May 12, 2021, on Zoom beginning at 10:00 AM.

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RURAL TRANSPORTATION COORDINATING COMMITTEE

February 24, 2021

ACTION ITEMS

Action Items	By Whom	Due Date
Send out the RPO's letter supporting alternative funding sources to regional legislators.	PennDOT District 9	Following the meeting
Send out graphic/information on the revenue sources proposed in the PA Pathways Program along with other ideas that are being put forth to close the transportation infrastructure funding gap to the RTCC members.	Brandon Peters	Following the meeting
Share/develop milestones on the Preliminary Engineering, INFRA grant process, and overall tentative construction timeline.	PennDOT District 9	March 31, 2021
Conduct discussions to determine who would be the lead agency/state on a potential joint state INFRA Grant application.	PennDOT District 9	March 31, 2021
Work with PennDOT to set up a meeting with Senator Edwards and the stakeholders in Maryland and Pennsylvania to discuss milestones and coordinate all parties on the process forward.	SAP&DC	March 31, 2021