

PENNSYLVANIA STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION  
BUSINESS MEETING  
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA  
DECEMBER 10, 2020



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

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Chair Yassmin Gramian, P.E. convened the quarterly business meeting of the State Transportation Commission (STC) at 10:02 am on December 10, 2020.

**ROLL CALL:**

**Commissioners Present on the Phone:**

1. Honorable Yassmin Gramian, Chair
2. Honorable Chad M. Amond
3. Honorable Ronald J. Drnevich
4. Honorable George M. Khoury
5. Honorable Tim Hennessey
6. Honorable Michael Carroll
7. Honorable Kim Ward  
    Mr. Nolan Ritchie, Alternate Present
8. Honorable John P. Sabatina  
    Mr. Jason Gerard, Alternate Present
9. Honorable Sharon L. Knoll, Vice-Chair
10. Honorable James D. Kingsborough
11. Honorable Frank E. Paczewski
12. Honorable Paige Willan

**Commissioners Not Present**

None.

**MINUTES:**

**ON A MOTION** by Mr. Ronald Drnevich and seconded by Mr. Frank Paczewski, and unanimously approved, the August 13, 2020, STC business meeting minutes were accepted.

**CHAIR’S REMARKS:**

Secretary Gramian welcomed Commissioners and guests to the STC meeting. Ms. Gramian explained that PennDOT is facing dire funding issues due to significant COVID-19 related revenue loss.

Secretary Gramian noted that PennDOT’s request for bonding authority was not included in the State’s budget. She explained that although the Governor has approved a short-term funding mechanism to continue operations through February 2021, new projects are on hold until there is a more definitive funding solution available to replace the revenue loss.

Secretary Gramian said that the short-term solution is complex and not typically within department authority to do. Unless there is a long-term solution, the 2021 construction and maintenance programs will be decimated.

Secretary Gramian also explained that the gas tax (the main source of transportation funding) is no longer viable, because of increased fuel efficiency. The Federal Government has not taken any significant action for a long-term funding solution for transportation. Therefore, she said, PennDOT is considering various alternative funding sources. She added that the Department has launched the PennDOT Pathways Program to evaluate other long-term funding solutions.

Mr. Hennessey commented about a proposed solution to transfer money from the Treasury to PennDOT.

Secretary Gramian said that the option was considered but it requires the money to be paid back before the end the fiscal year. She added that Department is seeking long-term relief.

Mr. Ritchie asked if there is any insight on whether there will be funding for Highway and Bridge programs in the next Stimulus Package; and if PennDOT is taking any active measures working with congress?

Secretary Gramian said based on the latest news, no relief for Highways and Bridges has been included in the next package but the Department is working with NASTO and AASHTO to get the word out to lawmakers.

Secretary Gramian also welcomed Mr. Daniel Keane to the STC management team. Mr. Keane briefly introduced himself.

**2021 TWELVE YEAR TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM: By Larry Shifflet**

Deputy Secretary Larry Shifflet presented the 2021 Twelve Year Transportation Program (TYP) adjustments stating that between October 1, 2020 and November 19, 2020, there were 829 program adjustments including:

- 344 Project/Phase Additions
- 105 Project/Phase Deletions
- 380 Project/Phase Changes

Mr. Shifflet said that the overall changes represent a \$26,571,827 increase for the reporting period.

Mr. Shifflet highlighted two major projects changes in the Lancaster MPO. The first is a decrease of the final design and construction phases for the US 222 Reconstruction project. The second is an addition of the SR 1024 Hammer Creek Replacement project.

**ON A MOTION** by Mr. Jimmy Kingsborough and seconded by Mr. Frank Paczewski the 2021 Twelve Year Program Adjustments were unanimously approved.

**WORKING SESSION:**

**2023 12-YEAR PROGRAM PUBLIC OUTREACH: By Christi Sabb**

Ms. Christi Sabb from McCormick Taylor gave a brief overview of the 2023 12-Year Program update process.

Ms. Sabb explained that the update process for the 2021 TYP began with the release of the Transportation Performance Report at the end of February 2019, which is then followed by a 45-day public comment period, from March through April. She noted that the feedback was the analyzed and shared with the STC and the MPOs and RPOs.

Ms. Sabb said the new Talk PA Transportation website launched on November 1, 2020. She explained that new and improved website provides educational tools, a search feature, and clear and accessible content; and will make it easier to share feedback following the 2023 TYP Public Outreach period, which will take place in early 2021.

Ms. Sabb noted the 2023 TYP Outreach Campaign will focus on increasing public forum attendance and survey participation during the 45 day public comment period. She added that the outreach campaign will rely on tools such as: print and broadcast media, social media campaigns, email blasts, promotional videos, and online toolkits.

A public forum will also be held through a web-based platform and Facebook live recording with an online registration site.

Ms. Sabb further explained that the 2023 TYP Public Outreach Campaign will focus on increasing the volume, and diversity of public participation, improving participant survey experience, and expanding stakeholder educational value. She added that for the 2023 TYP Public Outreach Campaign, the Outreach Team will be hosting a Focus Group with the MPOs and RPOs to gather feedback on the previous outreach effort.

Ms. Sabb concluded her presentation mentioning that the TYP Public Outreach Program, along with PennDOT Connects and the updated Statewide Public Participation Plan, were featured in the AASHTO Public Involvement Scan Tour, which took place over the course of three half-day virtual workshops in September and October 2020.

**PennDOT PATHWAYS: By Ken McClain.**

Mr. Ken McClain, the Alternative Funding Program Director, gave a presentation about the PennDOT Pathways program.

Mr. McClain explained that PennDOT Pathways is a program to address a significant and sustained funding gap that PennDOT has had for years. He added that PennDOT Pathways is looking at both near and long term funding sources to address a systemic funding gap, not just the pandemic caused financial emergency.

Mr. McClain said that PennDOT is responsible for maintaining, restoring and expanding nearly 40,000 miles of highway and roughly 25,000 bridges. He added that Pennsylvania needs sustainable infrastructure funding; and while traffic and freight travel have grown, the funds available to maintain the interstate system have not kept pace with the need.

Mr. McClain said that PennDOT is embarking on an extensive program that will examine possible near and long-term strategies for sustainable and dedicated funding because it has an annual highway and bridge funding gap of \$8.1 billion.

Mr. McClain explained that PennDOT's largest source of revenue, 74%, comes from the State and Federal gas tax, which makes Pennsylvania very dependent on the gas tax. Mr. McClain noted that the Federal gas tax has not increased since 1993 and the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted travel demand and reduced gas tax revenue, compounding the funding crisis.

Mr. Hennessey asked how much of the combined 74% gas tax is federal revenue and how much of that is state revenue?

Mr. McClain said that he will follow up. (21% is federal, 53% is state)

Mr. McClain also said that PennDOT is responsible, not only for the maintenance of its highways and bridges, but to improve mobility and contribute to a high quality of life by reducing congestion and improving safety on the transportation system. He added that PennDOT Pathways program will help:

- Maintain a state of good repair of our facilities
- Expand our system to manage congestion
- Improve our transportation network – the backbone of our economy.

Mr. McClain noted that the PennDOT Pathways includes two initiatives; a Planning and Environmental Linkages study or "PEL" and the Major Bridge P3 initiatives. The PEL will develop and evaluate options for funding our transportation system, with both near and long-term solutions. It is set to be completed in early 2021.

Mr. McClain also said that other funding strategies, such as Bridge Tolling, Managed Lanes, Congestion Pricing, Corridor Tolling, and Road user charges (vehicle miles traveled tax) and Fee/Tax increases are also being studied.

He said that Pennsylvania's Public Private Transportation Partnership (P3) Board recently approved a new transportation initiative that will help accelerate the reconstruction and rehabilitation of major bridges in partnership with the private sector. He discussed the benefits of bridge tolling and the use of a Public Private Partnership procurement method including:

- Accelerated delivery
- Secure dedicated user-based funding for long term maintenance
- Advances local and regional projects
- Leverages private industry for innovation and financing
- Continued stewardship supporting economic vitality and development

### **PA Department of Transportation Update:**

#### **Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)**

TAC chair Ms. Jody Holton, AICP, stated that the TAC report stands as written and added that the TAC has started the process of study topic identification for the next TAC study. She added that STC members are also welcome to submit topic ideas.

#### **Executive Deputy Secretary**

Executive Deputy Secretary Mr. George McAuley, P.E., gave a brief report in which he explained that funding remains an issue. He added that a short-term solution through the Motor License Fund is in place for now and, if needed, the option to borrow from the Treasury will be explored.

Mr. McAuley noted all areas of the Department are busy working on finding solutions to address the funding issue.

#### **Policy Office**

Senior policy advisor, Mr. Roger Cohen, gave an update about a special project to assess the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on transportation and travel behavior.

Mr. Cohen explained that the project is looking at how the Department can adapt to changes induced by the pandemic. He also talked about the work plan and the eleven scenarios being studied including:

- Transit ridership disrupted
- Altered VMT patterns & volumes
- Micromobility deployments
- Supply chain reconfiguration
- Changing land-use & housing
- Bike/ped activity increases
- E-commerce expansion
- Repurposing of ROW
- More aggressive driving
- Shift from air to ground travel
- Telemobility & remote work

Mr. Cohen said that the work group surveyed the State's transportation planning community and assessed new tools to modernize transportation planning in the Commonwealth in the wake of COVID-19 related changes.

Mr. Cohen discussed survey findings and strategies.

Mr. Cohen also mentioned the work group members and said he hoped to get a report ready by early next year.

Mr. Drnevich asked if there is knowledge of any Federal or State agencies working on similar initiatives.

Mr. Cohen answered yes. He added that Caltrans, TRB, Chicago and the Metro Atlanta MPO are working on similar projects.

Mr. Ritchie commented about the decrease in ridership for transit agencies. He noted that it is going to be difficult to convince the General Assembly to continue to fund public transportation if the demand does not rebound.

Mr. Cohen commented that is an important issue. He added that the hope is that Congress and the incoming Administration will find a long term solution to fund transportation.

Ms. Holton commented that SEPTA's projections showed a decrease in ridership demand for regional travel. She added that intercity ridership demand has rebounded to 80% pre-pandemic levels but the uncertainty remains.

Deputy Secretary Granger commented that the decrease in ridership is more noticeable in urban areas than the rural areas. She said that the Deputate is closely monitoring the situation and hope the next stimulus package will help address some of the issue.

### **Administration and Budget**

Mr. Robert Chiappelli, Deputy Secretary for Administration, gave a brief report about his Deputate. Mr. Chiappelli said that the majority of the Department's workforce is working on site and the rest is teleworking. He added that the temporary telework order has been extended.

Mr. Chiappelli explained that the Office of Administration is still establishing the foundations for a permanent telework policy to include a management directive.

Mr. Chiappelli said that winter temporary work hiring has started but the Department is behind compared to last year. He noted that temporary hiring stands at 44% compared to 50% at the same time last year.

Mr. Chiappelli mentioned that the Bureau of Innovation held the first ever virtual innovation week in November.

Mr. Chiappelli concluded his update noting the fact that the Bureau of Office Services continues to work on COVID-19 mitigation in Welcome Centers and other PennDOT facilities.

### **Driver and Vehicle Services**

Deputy Secretary for Driver and Vehicle Services, Mr. Kurt Myers, noted that his report stands as written but added that COVID-19 mitigation efforts continue.

Mr. Myers explained that the DVS has addressed all the backlogs, except for personalized license plates because the prison where they are produced has been on lockdown.

Mr. Myers also noted that DVS has eliminated 1.1 million customers from having to go on site for driver's license renewals by implementing the photo on file. He also added that the skills testing with examiner out of the vehicle continues.

Mr. Myers concluded his update noting that the DVS resumed issuing Real IDs in September. He added that the demand is relatively low for now.

### **Highway and Bridge Program**

Deputy Secretary Ms. Melissa Batula, P.E., gave an update for the Highway Administration Deputate.

Ms. Batula mentioned that the Rapid Bridge Replacement Program has completed all 558 bridges.

Ms. Batula noted that the number of poor bridges has been reduced from 6,049 to 2,624, and that the Department is shifting its approach to do preventive work to address bridges before they get in poor condition.

Ms. Batula also announced that winter maintenance is underway but staffing remains an issue. She added that several strategies to keep employees safe and contingency plans, including using contracted labor, are in place.

Ms. Batula said that letting program has been reduced to 1.9 billion.

Ms. Batula noted innovations within the deputate:

- Digital delivery directive – Using 3D models from design as our contractual design.
- Pilot programs for the use of e-ticketing on the job site for material certifications.
- The use of drones for construction and bridge inspection activities.
- Pilot program for using augmented reality displaying construction plans through safety goggles on the job site.
- Smart work zones - Work zones that communicate with autonomous vehicles.

### **Multimodal Transportation**

Deputy Secretary Ms. Jennie Granger, AICP, gave a brief update. Ms. Granger said that there has been a delay in getting the Rail Freight projects ready for the STC approval but a meeting will soon be scheduled to seek approval.

### **Office of Planning**

Deputy Secretary for Planning, Mr. Larry Shifflet, gave a brief update about his Deputate. Mr. Shifflet explained that the FAST Act has expired but Congress passed a 1-year extension. He added that the gas tax is no longer sustainable.

Mr. Shifflet also announced that the PA Highway statistics publication is available.

### **Office of Transformational Technology**

Mr. Mark Kopko gave an update about the Office of Transformational Technology's activities. He explained the office's role saying that it:

- Serves as a subject matter expert on all transformational technologies and support integration into the Department's existing business areas.
- Identifies and investigates emerging technologies that may have cross-cutting impacts to Pennsylvania's transportation network.
- Coordinates with all stakeholders to ensure consistency and interoperability as technology is deployed.

Mr. Kopko listed some of the activities his Office has been working on including:

#### *Automated Vehicles:*

- AV Testing Guidance 2.0 released.
- Advisory Committee:
  - Communications and Engagement Plan
  - Platooning Transit Vehicle Feasibility Study
  - Fully Automated Vehicle Guiding Principles
- ADS Demonstration Grant – Work Zones
- AV Incident Response Plan

#### *Truck Platooning:*

- Act 117 of 2018
- Platooning Vehicle Policy
- Multi-State Demonstration
  - Evaluate administrative procedures vs. policy

#### *Personal Delivery Devices:*

- Act 106 of 2020
- Developing a Policy and Application Process
  - Coordinating with locals
  - Feedback from advocacy groups



- Outreach to other states
- Effective January 30, 2021

*Fiber and Broadband:*

- Created internal working group
- Developing a fiber deployment plan
  - Identifying uses cases/needs
  - Designating statewide fiber ring for added redundancy
  - Expansion recommendations
  - Integration into existing initiatives

*Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Taskforce:*

- Coordination with key public and private stakeholders
- 10-year strategic plan
  - UAS mobility corridor network
  - UAS management center
- Various use cases
  - Supplemental
  - First-/Last-Mile
  - Personal Mobility

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

Representative Mike Carroll thanked the Secretary and all the PennDOT staff for continuing to do an outstanding job through these uncertain times.

**NEXT MEETING:**

The next STC quarterly meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, February 17, 2021.**

**STC 2021 MEETING DATES:**

- February 17, 2021; Wednesday 10:00 to 12:00  
Location: Virtual
- June 9, 2021; Wednesday 10:00 to 12:00  
Location: TBD
- September 15, 2021; Wednesday 10:00 to 12:00  
Location: TBD
- December 15, 2021; Wednesday 10:00 to 12:00  
Location: TBD

**ON A MOTION** by Mr. Ronald Drnevich and seconded by Mr. Chad Amond, the 2021 STC quarterly meeting dates were approved.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**ON A MOTION** by Mr. Ronald Drnevich and seconded by Mr. Frank Paczewski, the STC quarterly meeting was adjourned at 12:07 PM