

PENNSYLVANIA STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION  
BUSINESS MEETING  
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA  
MAY 6, 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:**

Ms. Yassmin Gramian, P.E., Chair, convened the quarterly business meeting of the State Transportation Commission (STC) at 10:01 am on May 6, 2020.

**ROLL CALL:**

**Commissioners Present on the Phone:**

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

**Commissioners Not Present**

None

**MINUTES:**

**ON A MOTION** by Mr. Frank Paczewski and seconded by Ms. Sharon Knoll, and unanimously approved, the February 20, 2020, STC business meeting minutes were accepted.

**CHAIR'S REMARKS:**

Chair Yassmin Gramian welcomed Commissioners and guests to the STC meeting.

Ms. Gramian explained that given the focus on COVID-19 and because a lot of things have changed so rapidly, the traditional written reports were forgone to favor more up to date verbal reports. As a result, the agenda has been slightly adjusted to ensure each Deputy has sufficient time to discuss how each of their areas have adjusted to the pandemic.

Ms. Gramian also noted that this meeting is occurring on the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the passage of Act 120 of 1970, which created PennDOT and the State Transportation Commission.

Ms. Gramian gave an update on the Department's efforts to adjust to office closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. She explained how proud she was with how all staff responded and adjusted to the sudden change.

Ms. Gramian explained that the pandemic has impacted all aspects of the Department's operations, but with a lot partnerships and collaborations, the Department was able to quickly adjust through Teleworking and later resumed critical construction work without compromising the safety and the health of both employees and communities.

Ms. Gramian also noted that the Department has assessed the impacts of the revenue shortfall due to the pandemic and is working diligently to determine how to maximize available funds without compromising the integrity of Pennsylvania's infrastructure.

Ms. Gramian mentioned that discussions with the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission (PTC) about Act 44 payments have occurred, and it is uncertain at this moment if the PTC will be able to make the payments given their current revenue conditions.

Ms. Gramian announced that due to a schedule conflict, she will leave the meeting early and Vice-Chair, Ms. Sharon Knoll will chair the remainder of the meeting.

**2019 TWELVE YEAR TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM: By Larry Shifflet**

Deputy Secretary Larry Shifflet presented the 2019 Twelve Year Transportation Program (TYP) adjustments stating that between January 22, 2020, and April 24, 2020, there were 1,422 program adjustments including:

- 451 Project/Phase Additions
- 735 Project/Phase Changes
- 139 Project/Phase Deletions
- 97 Adjustments to Funding Line Items

Mr. Shifflet said that the overall changes represent a \$257.9 million increase for the reporting period.

Mr. Ritchie asked if the impacts of the COVID-19 are reflected in the program changes.

Mr. Shifflet answered that the reporting period closed in April and the impacts of the pandemic will be shown in the next report.

Mr. Hennessey commented about bridge bundling projects, which he said tend to exclude smaller contractors.

Mr. Shifflet said that some of the bundled bridge projects are P3 projects, but the Department is doing its best to get everyone a chance to bid on projects.

**ON A MOTION** by Mr. Jimmy Kingsborough and seconded by Mr. Frank Paczewski, the 2019 Twelve Year Program Adjustments were unanimously approved.

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

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

No report.

#### **Executive Deputy Secretary**

Executive Deputy Secretary Mr. George McAuley, P.E., gave a brief report in which he expressed his pride in the way the Department has adapted to conducting business differently amid the pandemic. He explained that as soon as the closure was ordered, the Department started working on a strategic plan to define the best way to continue to operate safely.

Mr. McAuley said that teleworking has been very successful, and the Department will look to carry on until things gets back to normal.

Executive Secretary McAuley also noted that because of the pandemic and the resulting revenue loss, there will be cuts to construction expenditures.

Mr. Drnevich asked about the estimated revenue loss.

Mr. McAuley answered that current estimates are between \$800 - \$900 Million.

#### **Administration and Budget**

Mr. Robert Chiappelli, Deputy Secretary for Administration, gave a brief report about his Deputate's activities through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Chiappelli noted that the majority of the commonwealth's employees have been teleworking and the IT department has done a great job to support everyone with VPN connection and other IT related needs.

Mr. Chiappelli explained that the Bureau of Innovation is working on the results of the Organizational Climate Survey and the Telework Survey. He added that the data will be shared once available.

Mr. Chiappelli said that the Budget Office is also working on assessing the impacts of revenue loss and how to adjust programs.

Mr. Chiappelli also said that the office closure has affected 5,000 employees that have been placed on leave. The Department has since partnered with the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture through the Department of General Services to get some of the affected employees back to work. He explained that 4,400 employees are still out of work and his office is doing everything possible to bring them back as soon as possible.

Mr. Chiappelli concluded his update noting the fact that the Department continues to offer critical services to internal and external customers is a testament to the dedication and professionalism of the team.

### **Driver and Vehicle Services**

Deputy Secretary for Driver and Vehicle Services, Mr. Kurt Myers, gave an update about his Deputate. He noted that a few days after the March 16, 2020 closure, some employees were brought back to continue to process service requests received online and through mail.

Mr. Myers explained that the Motorcycle Training Program was closed until further notice. He indicated that there have been discussions with the vendor but because an agreement could not be reached, the Department has decided to cancel the contract, and will look to start a new program as soon as possible.

Mr. Myers also noted that upon closing facilities, the Department sent a letter to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and requested that they postpone the REAL ID enforcement deadline. DHS has since agreed to postpone the enforcement date to October 1, 2021.

Mr. Myers also discussed CDL testing centers. He noted that four locations have been operational for about two weeks and offer both skills and knowledge testing. Mr. Myers said that in the 24 counties that are scheduled to reopen, driver license centers will also reopen but service will be limited, and skills tests will not be available. He also noted that Commonwealth-wide, Real ID delivery will not resume until later in the summer.

Mr. Myers concluded his update noting that the Keystone Tree Fund donation is now available as an option when renewing a driver's license

Mr. Hennessey asked why CDL testing is reopening while the motorcycle training program is halted.

Mr. Myers said that CDL testing does not require any in-class training, but motorcycle training requires an all-day in classroom training.

Mr. Hennessey asked if the motorcycle training program contract cancellation was mutual.

Mr. Myers answered that there was a clause in the contract that allowed the Department to terminate the contract.

Mr. Hennessey asked when will the Riverfront Office Center (ROC) open.

Mr. Myers answered that some staff will resume work on site within a week, but the counter services will not resume until it is safe to do so.

Mr. Shelly asked when the ROC will resume processing vehicle titles.

Mr. Myers said that staff will begin work in a week.

Mr. Ritchie asked about the skills test schedule once the ROC opens.

Mr. Myers said that over 20,000 skills tests were cancelled. He added that once the centers reopen, skills tests will not be available right away; there will be a modified skills test procedure in place to minimize the contact.

### **Highway and Bridge Program**

Deputy Secretary Ms. Melissa Batula, P.E., gave an update about Highway Administration's activities through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ms. Batula explained that within 12 hours of the Governor's order, the Department closed normal operations in District 6 and Montgomery County and within two business days it had closed all offices statewide and shifted to essential functions operations and implemented full telework. She added that even the traffic management center operations have been moved to a telework setting.

Ms. Batula explained that shortly after the closure, Acting Secretary Gramian convened a taskforce to work on how to safely resume construction work on critical projects. On March 31, 2020, the Department announced that 61 emergency and critical highway and bridge projects would resume statewide. Since then, the Department announced the activation of 47 more critical highway and bridge projects on April 20, 2020, and 60 more critical projects on April 27, 2020. Ms. Batula added that on May 1, 2020, nearly all remaining highway and bridge projects were activated in accordance with Governor Wolf's April 23, 2020, order to allow in-person construction operations to resume on May 1.

### **Multimodal Transportation**

Deputy Secretary Ms. Jennie Granger, AICP, gave an update about her Deputate's activities related to COVID-19.

Ms. Granger explained that the Philadelphia port remained open throughout the pandemic to provide an uninterrupted supply chain. Also, at the Port of Erie, the first international ship of the

season arrived in early April. She noted that heightened safety protocols were developed and implemented by the Port, US Coast Guard, Carmuese Terminal and vessel crew.

On the transit side, Ms. Granger said public transportation is still essential, though service has been limited. Ms. Granger said that busses are still running so people can get to work. She added that some fixed route agencies have implemented free fares to reduce driver interactions with riders while shared ride agencies are also running and providing essential trips.

Ms. Granger also noted that the Commonwealth will be receiving \$1.1 billion in federal CARES Act funding for public transportation. The Department is working with the transit agencies and Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) to apply for funding and make sure that the funding is in the hands of the agencies.

On the aviation side, Ms. Granger said that her office has provided guidance to project sponsors ensuring that all projects are conducted with the appropriate balance of public health and safety while ensuring the continued delivery of critical services and functions. She added that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has the ultimate jurisdiction over the airports.

For passenger rail, Ms. Granger noted that ridership on the Keystone service decreased more than 19% from the third quarter of fiscal year 2019-20 compared to the third quarter of fiscal year 2018-19 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. She added that the Keystone began operating a reduced service on March 16 and was suspended on March 18.

Mr. Kingsborough asked about the impacts of the revenue loss on the aviation grants.

Ms. Granger said that her office is working on ways to mitigate the impacts of the revenue loss. She added that the CARES Act funds will soon be available, but it is not clear if that would be enough to cover the grants.

Mr. Kingsborough asked if the federal funds are exclusively for public airports.

Ms. Granger answered yes.

Mr. Ritchie asked if the FAA has provided any guidance on face masks in airports.

Ms. Granger said that there was no guidance at this moment from the FAA about face masks.

Mr. Ritchie commented about directing the public to airport websites to find relevant information about COVID-19 related travel requirements.

Mr. Hennessey commented about PennDOT taking the lead on calling the PA delegates in Congress to allow the use of the CARES Act funds for private airports.

Ms. Willan commented about issues with limited public transit service in Philadelphia.

Ms. Granger said she has had conversations with Ms. Leslie Richards, who is the current SEPTA General Manager. She added that Ms. Richards and her team are working on both short- and long-term solutions to the issues.

Mr. Shelly commented about the delays in getting the CARES Act funds to rural transit agencies when most urban transit agencies are already receiving the funds.

Ms. Granger said that delay resides in the fact that urban transit agencies can apply directly with the FTA to get the funding, while the FTA funnels the funds to PennDOT to distribute to rural transit agencies.

Ms. Granger added that the Department has taken extra measures to ensure that rural transit agencies have cashflow to operate.

### **Office of Planning**

Deputy Secretary for Planning, Mr. Larry Shifflet gave a report highlighting the Office of Planning's activities throughout the COVID-19 related office closure. Mr. Shifflet noted that teleworking has been successful, and the staff has done a great job transitioning.

Mr. Shifflet explained that the CARES Act did not include any funding for Highway and Bridge infrastructure. He added that the funding needs for the Interstate System remain critical and with the revenue losses the Department is facing, Interstate maintenance is going to be a challenge.

Mr. Shifflet also indicated that the Department is working on different scenarios to stretch available funding as much as possible to cover operations.

Mr. Shifflet explained the Planning Deputate continues to process federal authorizations through electronic signature, which allows projects to continue to move forward and make them available for bidding.

Mr. Shifflet said that the municipal partners, in coordination with the Bureau of Planning and Research, have continued some Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) courses through webinars. Research projects continue to be coordinated and are moving forward. Payments to the municipalities continue to be reviewed and processed daily.

Mr. Shifflet also noted that Regions have started their Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) public comment periods and will hold public meetings. He added that public comment opportunities are being modified because of the pandemic.

## **WORKING SESSION**

### **2021 TWELVE YEAR PROGRAM UPDATE: By Lugene Keys**

Ms. Lugene Keys from McCormick Taylor gave an update on the 2021 Twelve Year Program (TYP), which is set for adoption at the STC Meeting in August.

Ms. Keys noted that while the 2021 TYP will use a similar format to the 2019 digital and print TYP, the goal is to enhance and update both versions.

Ms. Keys said that once the draft TYP is completed, a copy will be mailed to STC Commissioners in early August for review. The web version will be unveiled at the STC meeting on August 13, 2020. Once the STC votes to adopt the TYP, both the digital and print versions will be available for public viewing on the website.

Ms. Keys discussed the timeline for the website update saying that a new design for [www.TalkPATransportation.com](http://www.TalkPATransportation.com) was developed this past winter. She added that the work is still ongoing, and the plan is to have a soft launch of the site in July 2020. Once the new site is live, STC members and the public will be able to view it. The old site will also be available for a short time. A hard launch is scheduled for August.

Ms. Keys concluded her update discussing the 30 day TIP Public Comment Periods. She explained that for the first time, the Talk PA Transportation website is being used to promote and link to MPO and RPO TIP public comment periods. She added that each region is inviting comments for 30 days between April and July. A map on the STIP webpage provides information on each comment period and links to each MPO and RPO where documents can be reviewed, and comments provided.

### **LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION/COMPREHENSIVE FREIGHT MOVEMENT PLANS: By Brian Funkhouser**

Brian Funkhouser from Michael Baker gave a brief update on the Long Range Transportation (LRTP) and Comprehensive Freight Movement (CFMP) Plans.

He explained that Executive Leadership interviews have been completed and over eighteen executives have taken part.

Mr. Funkhouser explained some core themes discussed in the leadership interviews including:

- *Improving the land use-transportation connection for cost savings and reduced congestion.*
- *Producing a plan that has accountability and serves as a tool for transportation decision makers.*
- *Increasing STC involvement in guiding program development (e.g. TYP) around the question "What are we trying to accomplish with our project investments?"*



- *Enhancing involvement of PennDOT Districts in plan development and implementation with the intent of realizing tangible benefits.*

Mr. Funkhouser listed the next steps in development of the LRTP and the CFMP, which include:

- Finalizing executive leadership interviews
- Launching data collection and analytical work
- Building a transportation planning database
- Finalizing the LRTP process roadmap
- Ongoing stakeholder engagement

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

## **NEXT MEETING**

The next STC quarterly meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, August 13, 2020**, in Wilkes-Barre, PA.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**ON A MOTION** by Mr. Tim Hennessey and seconded by Mr. Ronald Drnevich, the STC quarterly meeting was adjourned at 11:53 AM.

## **FOLLOW UP ITEMS**

### **Multimodal Department Update**

Deputy Secretary for Multimodal Transportation will provide additional information to the four chairs about additional measures taken to make sure that rural transit agencies have enough cashflow to operate.

Ms. Granger will also follow up on PennDOT taking the initiative to ask the PA delegate to ask Congress to allow the use of the CARES Act funds on private airports.