

PENNSYLVANIA STATE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
BUSINESS MEETING
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA
JULY 16TH, 2020



CALL TO ORDER:

The business meeting of the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) was called to order on Skype at 10:03 a.m. on July 16, 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 TAC business meetings.

MINUTES:

ON A MOTION by Mr. Ronald Wagenmann and seconded by Mr. John Pocius, P.E., PLS, and unanimously approved, the Minutes of February 3, 2020, TAC Business Meeting were accepted.

MINUTES:

ON A MOTION by Mr. Tom Geanopulos and seconded by Mr. Elam Herr, P.E., PLS, and unanimously approved, the Minutes of April 9, 2020, TAC Business Meeting were accepted.

CHAIR'S REMARKS:

TAC Chair, Ms. Jody Holton gave brief remarks welcoming TAC members to the Skype meeting. Ms. Holton provided some updates including:

- The implementation of new bylaws which included the roll call at the beginning of the meeting and the election of a Vice Chair which will occur shortly.
- The announcement of the passing of TAC member Kevin Stewart.

SECRETARY'S REMARKS:

Secretary Yassmin Gramian, P.E. gave remarks in which she highlighted how the Department has adjusted to teleworking. Secretary Gramian said that since the Pandemic started, a virtual work environment has been developed and has been implemented successfully.

Secretary Gramian noted that revenue forecasts are not looking good, which further compounds a greater funding issue. Secretary Gramian indicated that the Department is exploring alternative revenue sources to mitigate the funding issue. More ideas are being explored and the final product will be shared with the Committee, she added.

Secretary Gramian said that the Department is now focused on putting together short-term solutions to maintain the infrastructure, which isn't ideal but necessary.

Secretary Gramian explained that the Department has shifted to virtual training to continue to improve workforce development. She noted that Department has been exempted from the statewide hiring freeze, so it will continue to improve its workforce.

Secretary Gramian also discussed diversity and minority business recovery initiatives.

Mr. Murawski asked if there is a chance Congress would pass a transportation funding bill before the November election.

Secretary Gramian said that it is very unlikely there will be a transportation funding bill passed before the election.

EXECUTIVE DEPUTY SECRETARY'S REMARKS:

Executive Secretary, Mr. George McAuley, P.E. provided brief remarks on how the Department is adjusting to conducting business during the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr. McAuley said that all maintenance offices are still closed and telework is continuing. Mr. McAuley noted that revenue shortfall will continue to be an issue, but the Department is working through it.

ELECTION OF TAC VICE CHAIR

The TAC voted to elect a Vice Chair. The election of the Vice Chair is one of the proposals being implemented as part of Enhanced Communication and Coordination Initiative.

Mr. Mark Murawski was nominated by Ms. Brenda Sandberg and Mr. John Pocius and Mr. Ronald Wagenmann was nominated by Mr. Elam Herr and Alan Blahovec.

Mr. Murawski received the majority of the votes and was elected Vice Chair.

ON A MOTION by Ms. Brenda Sandberg and seconded by Mr. John Pocius, and unanimously approved, the election of Mr. Mark Murawski as TAC Vice Chair was approved.

TRUCK WEIGHT STATUTORY EXEMPTIONS – A TAC IMPACT ANALYSIS: By Brian Funkhouser, Kathy Malarich, Keith Chase, and Tom Phelan.

Mr. Brian Funkhouser introduced the Truck Weight Exemptions study. He reiterated that the purpose of the study is to understand the impacts of various truck weight exemptions enacted over the past decades.

Mr. Funkhouser explained that the purpose of the study is to complete an initial assessment of the complex range of impacts of two decades of overweight truck permitting. The study, he added, is not intended to make recommendations, but rather to begin framing further discussions and research to inform decision-makers.

Ms. Kathy Malarich discussed the study methodology, which consisted of:

- Stakeholder engagement (trucking, rail, and shippers).
- Interviews with state officials.
- Literature review.

- Analysis of PennDOT permit data.

Mr. Tom Phelan discussed nine findings, which include:

- PennDOT issued nearly 577,000 overweight permits over a two-year period from 2016 to 2018; overweight and oversize permits yielded a combined \$72 million in estimated revenue.
- Most truck weight-exempted travel under PennDOT permits originates and ends in Pennsylvania.
- Truck weight exemptions accelerate deterioration of Pennsylvania’s aging state and local road and bridge network. The cost of this damage cannot be determined using available data.
- Overweight truck permits may increase or decrease truck trips or truck miles depending on the freight economics of the situation.
- Truck weight exemptions appear to shift a significant portion of heavy truck traffic off Interstate highways and onto state and local roads, raising both infrastructure and safety concerns.
- Shippers whose commodities are transported using overweight permitted trucks are beneficiaries of the transport cost savings provided by the overweight permits. But the economic benefits of overweight permitting are not distributed evenly across Pennsylvania businesses and residents.
- Pennsylvania’s rail freight operators, particularly regional and short lines, are placed at a competitive disadvantage by some truck weight exemptions.
- Enforcement of truck weight limits is likely inconsistent across Pennsylvania’s municipalities.
- Experiences of other states can help inform PA’s further evaluation of truck weight exemptions.

Mr. Keith Chase discussed the Key Considerations including:

- The need for better data on costs to infrastructure, including cumulative impacts.
- The need for a broader understanding of the total positive and negative impacts of truck weight exemptions—particularly the economic impacts across industries and modes and the adverse impacts that cannot readily be quantified in dollar terms.
- The need for a more rigorous examination of overweight truck exemptions in light of other Commonwealth responsibilities and initiatives.

Mr. Herr commented that the use of “state roads” in the report seems to imply that only state roads are being impacted by the truck weight exemption issue.

Mr. Phelan answered that the term refers to all roads.

Mr. Murawski commented that the efforts to refocus funding on the Interstate System has shifted the attention away from secondary roads. He said there is a need to strike the right balance.

ON A MOTION by Mr. Mark Murawski and seconded by Mr. John Pocius the *Truck Weight Statutory Exemptions – A TAC Impact Analysis Study* was unanimously approved with revisions.

TAC STUDY UPDATES

The TAC continues to work on three other study topics. Mr. Troy Truax, Mr. Dale Witmer, AICP, and Mr. Brian Funkhouser gave an update about the TAC studies.

Statewide Small Local Bridge Investment Plan

Mr. Truax gave an update on the Statewide Small Bridge Investment Plan Study. He highlighted the Draft report, which was submitted to the taskforce for review.

Mr. Truax discussed some preliminary Key Findings including:

- The need for a standardized approach for inventorying and assessing the condition of local small bridge structures to ensure consistency and accuracy of the data collected and maintained.
- Technical and financial resources are needed to support and incentivize local municipalities with their bridge asset management efforts.

Mr. Truax noted that a taskforce meeting to discuss the draft report will be held from 1-3PM after the TAC meeting. He added that input received from taskforce members will be incorporated in the Draft and discussed at the October 15th taskforce meeting.

Utilities in the State Right-of-Way

Mr. Witmer gave an update about the Utilities in the State Right-of-Way Study. Mr. Witmer highlighted outreach efforts being conducted and the next steps moving forward.

Mr. Witmer also discussed some ongoing initiatives to improve utilities coordination including:

- The rollout of PennDOT Utility Relocation Management System (URMS) to primarily support design and construction.
- PennDOT Connects and One Map integration into project planning, collaboration, and funding processes.
- PA One Call's Coordinate PA, which is a web service application developed by Pennsylvania 811 to support Public Works and utility project planning and utility coordination within the Commonwealth.

Mr. Witmer noted that a taskforce meeting will be held from 1-3PM after the TAC meeting to discuss the Survey set to go out to stakeholders. Taskforce members will discuss survey questions and distributions processes.

The survey will be sent out the following week and the input received will be discussed at the next taskforce meeting in the October.

2021 Transportation Performance Report

Mr. Brian Funkhouser gave an update on the 2021 Transportation Performance Report. Mr. Funkhouser noted that the TPR serves as the kickoff to the 2023 Twelve Year Program Update.

Mr. Funkhouser indicated that preliminary meetings with PennDOT Staff and the TAC Chair, Ms. Jody Holton will take place in the coming weeks to discuss performance metrics and report formats.

PA Department of Transportation Update

Administration and Budget

Mr. Robert Chiappelli, Deputy Secretary for Administration, gave a brief report. Mr. Chiappelli said that the majority of the Department's workforce is working on site and the rest is teleworking.

Mr. Chiappelli explained that the Governor's Office authorized PennDOT a blanket exception to the hiring freeze currently in place for the Commonwealth. The Department can now manage hiring decisions in accordance with their authorized complement and budget.

Mr. Chiappelli explained that the Office of Administration is establishing the foundations for a permanent telework policy to include a management directive. He added that PennDOT has created a team to implement the directives when OA releases them.

Mr. Chiappelli concluded his update noting the fact that the Bureau of Office Services continues to purchase PPEs for employees.

Driver and Vehicle Services

Deputy Secretary for Driver and Vehicle Services, Mr. Kurt Myers, gave an update about his Deputate. Mr. Myers said most drivers license centers are now reopened.

Mr. Myers explained that PennDOT has implemented the use of photo on file for customers renewing a driver license or an identification card, which has allowed products renewed May 10 and forward to be completed online or through the mail and the product mailed to the customer.

Mr. Myers said that the skill test has been modified for non CDL tests. He explained that the examiner remains outside of the vehicle for the whole test.

Mr. Myers concluded his update noting that the DVS is gearing up to resume issuing Real IDs late this summer.

Highway and Bridge Program

Deputy Secretary Ms. Melissa Batula, P.E., gave an update about Highway Administration Deputate. Ms. Batula explained that revenue projections show an \$800 million revenue loss for the Motor License Fund over two fiscal years. Ms. Batula noted that the revenue shortfall has

forced the Department to reevaluate the construction budget; but maintenance operations will continue because there is enough budget available.

Ms. Batula also noted that maintenance budget is down \$300 million, which prompted a shift in terms of what gets done first.

Ms. Batula announced that fatalities numbers continue to trend down, reaching the lowest number ever recorded. She added that almost all aspects of the metrics are down except for motorcycle fatalities. Ms. Batula said that there is still progress to be made.

Ms. Batula concluded her update noting that the Department continues to update guidelines to keep employees and contractors safe and exploring ways to improve workforce performance.

Multimodal Transportation

Deputy Secretary Ms. Jennie Granger, AICP, gave a brief update in which she said that the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission has requested to delay the Act 44 payment to PennDOT. She explained that a payment plan has been worked out but based on Senate testimony it is likely the October payment will also be deferred.

Ms. Granger noted there will be cash flow issues at some point. She added that the CARES Act funds have helped for now, but long-term issues remain.

Ms. Granger also discussed the Reading Passenger Rail study and the Middletown train station construction, which should be ready late summer or early fall.

Office of Planning

Deputy Secretary for Planning, Mr. Larry Shifflet gave a brief update in which he said that the 12-Year Program update is progressing well and is expected to be adopted in August.

Mr. Shifflet noted that the Department continues to process and release payments to local municipalities while teleworking. He also added that the Department is continuing to work with the Regional Partners through video conference and public involvement has smoothly transitioned to virtual meetings as well.

OTHER BUSINESS

NEXT MEETING:

The next TAC business meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, October 15, 2020**, in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

ADJOURNMENT:

ON A MOTION by Ms. Brenda Sandberg and seconded by Mr. Tom Geanopulos, the TAC meeting was adjourned at 12:12 P.M.

Attendance* from the TAC Business Meeting
July 16, 2020

1. Ms. Jody Holton, AICP, Chair
2. Ms. Yassmin Gramian, P.E., TAC member
3. Ms. Brenda Sandberg, TAC member
4. Mr. Ashley Porter, P.E., TAC member
5. Ms. Karina Ricks, TAC member
6. Dr. Larry Nulton, TAC Member
7. Mr. Donald Detwiler, TAC Member
8. Mr. John Pocius, P.E., PLS, TAC member
9. Mr. Mark Murawski, TAC member
10. Mr. Elam Herr, TAC member
11. Mr. Alan Blahovec, CCPM, TAC member
12. Mr. Ronald Wagenmann, TAC member
13. Mr. Tom Geanopulos, TAC member
14. Mr. Mr. Mike Carroll, TAC member
15. Mr. Mr. Tim Kearney, TAC member
16. Mr. John Kashatus, alternate for Mr. Pedro Rivera, TAC member
17. Mr. Paul Opiyo, alternate for Mr. Dennis Davin, TAC member
18. Ms. Tiffany Landis, P.E., alternate for Mr. Patrick McDonnell, TAC member
19. Mr. Fred Strathmeyer, alternate for Mr. Russell Redding, TAC member
20. Mr. George McAuley, Jr., P.E., PennDOT
21. Ms. Melissa Batula, P.E., PennDOT
22. Ms. Sarah Clark, PennDOT
23. Ms. Natasha Fackler, PennDOT
24. Mr. Larry Shifflet, PennDOT
25. Mr. Kurt Myers, PennDOT
26. Ms. Jennie Granger, AICP, PennDOT
27. Mr. Roger Cohen, PennDOT
28. Mr. Robert Chiappelli, PennDOT
29. Mr. Shane Rice, PennDOT
30. Ms. Lugene Keys, McCormick Taylor
31. Ms. Leanne Doran, Michael Baker Int'l
32. Mr. Brian Funkhouser, Michael Baker Int'l
33. Mr. Troy Truax, AICP, Michael Baker Int'l
34. Mr. Bradley Duda, Michael Baker Int'l
35. Mr. Brian Link, Michael Baker Int'l
36. Ms. Audrey Corrado, Michael Baker Int'l
37. Mr. Dale Witmer, Michael Baker Int'l
38. Mr. Tim Smith, Gannett Fleming
39. Ms. Nicki Jacobs, GPI

40. Thomas Phelan, Gannett Fleming
41. Mr. Dan Cessna, Michael Baker Int'l
42. Ms. Allie Slizofski, Drive Engineering
43. Ms. Kathryn Malarich, Gannett Fleming
44. Mr. Brian Hare, P.E., PennDOT
45. Mr. Mark Tobin, PennDOT
46. Ms. Jessica Clark, PennDOT
47. Mr. Abdoul Ahmed, PennDOT
48. Mr. Terry Pinder, PennDOT
49. Mr. Brian Sharkey, PennDOT
50. Ms. Karen Heath, PennDOT

**Attendance includes members present via conference call.*