

PENNSYLVANIA STATE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
BUSINESS MEETING
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA
FEBRUARY 3RD, 2025



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

CALL TO ORDER:

A business meeting of the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) was called to order in the Keystone Building, Room 8N1, and on Microsoft Teams at 10:03 a.m. on February 3, 2025.

ROLL CALL:

Members Present:

1. Ms. Jody Holton
2. Honorable Angela Fitterer, Mr. John Kashatus, Alternate Present
3. Honorable Russell Redding, Mr. Fred Strathmeyer, Alternate Present
4. Honorable Rick Siger, Ms. Melissa Wright, Alternate Present
5. Honorable Timothy Kearney, Mr. Sam Arnold, Alternate Present
6. Mr. John Pocius
7. Mr. Alan Blahovec
8. Mr. Mark Murawski
9. Mr. Ron Wagenmann
10. Ms. Rebecca Oyler

Members Present on the Phone:

1. Honorable Stephen DeFrank, Mr. George DiCarlantonio, Alternate Present
2. Honorable Kerry Benninghoff, Mr. Kyle Schaeffer, Alternate Present
3. Mr. Jeffrey Letwin
4. Mr. Richard Barcaskey
5. Dr. Larry Nulton
6. Mr. Elam Herr
7. Mr. Jeffrey Stroehmann

Members Not Present

1. Honorable Michael B. Carroll
2. Honorable Akbar Hossain
3. Honorable Jessica Shirley
4. Honorable Wayne Langerholc
5. Honorable Ed Neilson

6. Mr. Michael A. Carroll
7. Mr. Jeff Mercadante
8. Ms. Felicia Dell
9. Mr. Ashley Porter
10. Mr. Charles Welker
11. Mr. Donald Detwiler

CHAIR'S REMARKS:

TAC Chair, Ms. Jody Holton, AICP, said she was on the front lines at NRG Station on Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority's (SEPTA) Broad Street Line, and helped guide over 30,000 happy football fans to the express trains after the Eagles recent football victory. SEPTA's public transit is key in moving people during events such as this.

ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR:

ON A MOTION by Mr. Alan Blahovec, seconded by Mr. John Pocius and unanimously approved, Mr. Mark Murawski was re-elected as Vice Chair.

MINUTES:

ON A MOTION by Mr. Ron Wagenmann, seconded by Mr. Pocius and unanimously approved, the Minutes of the December 11, 2025, TAC Business Meeting were accepted without changes.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION UPDATE:

Administration and Budget

Deputy Secretary Corey Pellington gave a brief update.

Mr. Pellington said that winter hiring continues, with 67 new temporary winter operators hired, now totaling 283 temporary operators. 97.4% of permanent positions within the department are filled, increasing by .5% since the last meeting.

Driver and Vehicle Services

Deputy Secretary Kara Templeton gave an update from Driver and Vehicle services.

Ms. Templeton said that PennDOT had opened an additional Driver License Center in Exeter Township, in the Reading area. This is a Real ID site that allows customers to receive a Real ID over the counter. She noted that customers can get a Real ID from any location, but final products from some sites will be sent via mail.

Ms. Templeton said May 7, 2025, is the federal Real ID deadline. It was estimated that 25% of Pennsylvania IDs will have Real ID by the deadline, which is currently at 23.9%. A final rule was issued that allows federal agencies that would requiring Real ID to phase enforcement if desired.

Driver and Vehicle Services will launch a public relations campaign to push Real ID beginning in March, including informational sessions and processing events.

The Electric Vehicle Road User Charge will become effective on April 1, 2025. Direct communication will be sent to EV owners before they renew their registration.

Mr. Murawski noted proposed legislation on vehicle emissions inspection (Senate Bill 35) and how it effects the State Implementation Plan. He asked Mr. Sam Arnold if the Committee had reached out to the new federal administration to see if they would relax environmental regulations to prevent that funding loss. Mr. Arnold said that they were not sure what Washington would do, and he was unaware of any legislative outreach to the new administration.

Multimodal

Deputy Secretary Meredith Biggica gave an update.

Ms. Biggica said the multimodal program accepted applications from September to November 2024, receiving approximately 170 applications. Of the 170, 105 needed curing. Applicants have until February to cure, otherwise the application will be deemed ineligible.

In 2024, the Pennsylvanian Amtrak line exceeded pre-pandemic ridership levels. This is partially due to adding an additional coach to the line during the Harrisburg track renewal project. The Keystone line remains at 80% of pre-pandemic ridership, and PennDOT is working with Amtrak to regain riders.

The Harrisburg Track Renewal project was a success. The truncation was a pilot program for Amtrak, and ridership losses were less than anticipated.

Ms. Biggica said station projects continue, with the Lancaster pedestrian bridge beginning construction in the next few weeks. Work on platforms is also ongoing, in an effort to keep stations in a state of good repair.

Mr. Pocius said that his area had received a grant for the Ash Street bridge in Scranton but hadn't seen progress on it. Ms. Biggica noted that it sometimes takes longer than they would like to execute a grant agreement.

Mr. Pocius asked why so many applications needed curing. Ms. Biggica said that it varies; some are missing information, such as a local resolution, budget, or multiple items. She noted they were only currently reviewing applications on an administrative, non-technical level. She said that some applicants may submit an unfinished application, knowing they can cure it later. The curing process extends the needed time; hence the announcements being made in August.

Ms. Holton said that the TAC's Local Match study recommended that PennDOT give assistance to smaller municipalities and applicants to help them through the grant and curing process.

Highway Administration

Deputy Secretary Christine Norris gave an update from Highway Administration.

Ms. Norris said that as of January, PennDOT has spent about \$123 million on winter operations about 66% of the 2024-2025 budget. This was 21% higher than last year, due to increased winter events. Salt usage is up 12%, totaling 370,000 tons of salt used thus far this winter, and 580,000 tons of salt are still available throughout the state.

Preliminary numbers for reportable crashes for 2024 were down approximately .5% to approximately 110,000 crashes. Fatalities were down 6% in 2024 to approximately 1,140, and injuries remained steady at 66,500. The numbers will be verified and officially reported in April.

In October 2024, PennDOT updated PUB 950 to include guidelines and a pathway to authorize driverless vehicles on Pennsylvania roads. There have been no applications or self-certifications to date. There are six certified companies to operate automated vehicles with a driver on board (Aurora Operations, Motional AD, Stack AV, Carnegie Mellon University, Perrone Robotics, and Mapless AI).

The letting program let 562 construction contracts in 2024, totaling \$2.72 billion. Project bids were slightly lower than engineering estimates, .33% below average. The 2024 bid price index is a little over 1% compared to 2023. The 2025 goal is a \$2.9 billion dollar letting program, and 581 projects.

PennDOT continues to work with construction partners on what can be done to improve project delivery efficiency.

Mr. Murawski noted the strong lettings in the past few years, and asked if PennDOT could handle a potential increase in lettings. Ms. Norris said they would be able to, and that they are always looking at new projects. Mr. Murawski asked if the contractors would have the capacity as well. Ms. Norris said that they have been working with industry partners on their capacity, and they would be able to.

Ms. Holton asked if projects were being delivered on time. Ms. Norris said they generally are, but projects must be moved sometimes, but never for capacity issues.

Mr. Arnold asked for an inflation update. Ms. Norris said that inflation was beginning to even out, and that the bid price index had only changed 1% in the last year and that project estimations have been very accurate.

Mr. Arnold asked about the six autonomous vehicle companies, how many cars they had, and where they were operating. Ms. Norris named the companies but would have to follow up on the number of vehicles. She said that most of the companies operate out of Pittsburgh.

(following the meeting, it was confirmed that approximately 25 vehicles use autonomous technology. Perrone Robotics operates in southeast Pennsylvania, using a shuttle in the Philadelphia Navy Yard. More information is available on the PennDOT website.

<https://www.pa.gov/agencies/penndot/research-planning-and-innovation/automated-vehicle/certificate-holders.html>)

Mr. Pocius asked if there was an area where the emphasis was on bridges. Ms. Norris said that bridges were still a large part of the portfolio, and that without action, bridge conditions would decrease. Mr. Pocius noted that there was previously a large emphasis on bridges. Ms. Norris said that the Rapid Bridge Replacement and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) had provided funds specifically for bridges. PennDOT is always looking for funding opportunities to put into bridges.

Mr. Pocius asked if interstates are part of the overall planning numbers, or if they are a different figure. Ms. Norris said that they are included.

Mr. Pocius noted the efforts of the maintenance teams for their efforts after the most recent snow event.

Planning

Deputy Secretary Kristin Mulkerin gave an update from the Planning deputate.

Ms. Mulkerin said that PennDOT's federal funding is still operating under a continuing resolution until March.

Ms. Mulkerin noted that Secretary Carroll and Mr. Shifflet were absent today due to the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) meeting.

She said IIJA is authorized through the end of the Federal Fiscal Year 2026.

Ms. Mulkerin said that the governor's budget address would be the following day, followed by the House and Senate Transportation Committee hearings later in the month.

Ms. Mulkerin said that there are a lot of changes happening on the federal side, and they are waiting for guidance from the US Department of Transportation.

Ms. Holton asked if any grants or funding had been paused. Ms. Mulkerin said there was a pause for a few hours, but highway and bridge projects are being reimbursed for work being done and can proceed with new obligations. Discretionary grants are still paused, which is not abnormal during administration changes.

Ms. Holton asked about new grants. Ms. Mulkerin said Pennsylvania had received twelve awards since the last meeting, which were now paused while waiting for guidance. She noted that North Central was successful with a bridge bundling under the rural program. The Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) has returned its name to Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD). The Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient and Cost-saving Transportation (PROTECT) NOFO is open, and PennDOT is waiting to see if changes are made.

Mr. Pocius asked if the funds awarded for the South Bridge were at risk. Ms. Mulkerin said the funds were not yet under contract, and the project is still moving forward. Ms. Mulkerin said they were still in coordination and hopeful that the funds were in a temporary pause.

Ms. Biggica said that Multimodal has a \$144 million grant that is not yet obligated. The first three early action projects necessary to deliver the second Pennsylvanian train are state-funded and still on track but was unsure of the status of the grant to fund the other nine projects. The Corridor ID from Scranton to New York moved into obligation step two before the new year.

2025 Transportation Performance Report (TPR)

Mr. Brian Funkhouser from Michael Baker, Intl, presented the 2025 TPR.

Mr. Funkhouser said that the TPR has been created every two years since 2013 and that this is the seventh iteration of the report. The TPR acts as the kickoff for the 2027 12-Year Program update cycle. Updates on this version include a redesigned look and feel, improved accessibility, and the addition of Equity and Environment sections.

Mr. Funkhouser said only one performance measure was listed as poor, Motorcyclist Fatalities. Each performance measure has qualitative and quantitative information and links to more

information. He also noted that the “Steady, Improving, Declining” scale refers to the performance statistic.

Ms. Holton asked what determines the difference between good, fair, and poor ratings. Mr. Funkhouser said they were subjective measures, determined by subject matter experts.

Mr. Funkhouser said the TPR is available in many languages through Google Translate. An abbreviated version called the Scorecard is also available for download. An accessibility button in the bottom-left corner allows easy manipulation of the text, colors, and other aspects of the page. A printable PDF file will also be available.

Mr. Ron Wagenmann asked if helmet data was available for the motorcycle fatalities. Mr. Funkhouser said that the TPR doesn’t go into that much detail. Motorcycle crashes are 3% of Pennsylvania crashes, but 17% of all fatalities.

Mr. Murawski noted the improvement of the TPR over time and suggested a look at what further resources are needed to enhance the TPR or to include in future iterations.

Ms. Holton asked if there were any more significant trends to be aware of. Mr. Funkhouser said that one of the things to note is the visible rebounding of some measures post-pandemic, such as Amtrak ridership.

Mr. Pocius said that more bridges were in fair condition than good or poor on the TPR and noted the difficulty of maintenance funding and a focus on preservation especially at the local level.

Mr. Pocius asked if railroad-owned bridges had to be inspected. Ms. Holton said they do. Mr. Murawski asked if PennDOT received those inspection reports. Ms. Biggica said that PennDOT does not, but they can be requested from the rail line.

Mr. Wagenmann asked if statistics are kept on bicyclist accidents. Mr. Funkhouser said that PennDOT does, but it is not specifically included in the TPR but is a part of the Vulnerable Road User factor.

Mr. Pocius asked if pedestrian accidents are included. Mr. Funkhouser said that PennDOT does, it is not specifically included in the TPR but is a part of the Vulnerable Road User measure.

Ms. Oyler asked about micromobility users, noting the micromobility presentation from a previous meeting. Ms. Biggica said that they would also be included in Vulnerable Road Users.

Mr. Pocius noted frustrations with bicyclists and asked if citations were issued to them. Ms. Biggica said that the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC) would track that statistic.

ON A MOTION by Mr. Alan Blahovec, seconded by Mr. Ron Wagenmann and unanimously approved, The 2025 Transportation Performance Report update was approved for consideration at the February 2025 State Transportation Committee (STC) Meeting.

Transportation and Land Use Implications of E-commerce Study

Mr. Tom Phelan from Michael Baker, Intl, gave a presentation of the final report.

Mr. Sam Arnold, task force chair, thanked the TAC for the extra time to finalize the study. He said the study was initially suggested in 2022, but it is always a good time to look at this

dynamic transportation industry. States such as Maryland and New York are looking into fees. The E-commerce industry is expected to oppose. He noted that there is more than just the recommendation to consider the analysis of a fee in the report since the report mostly focuses on transportation and land use planning.

Mr. Phelan said that the main objectives of the study were to identify land use changes, evaluate economic impact, identifying trends, and evaluate transportation implications.

Mr. Phelan described the changes to the supply chain, with customers now receiving goods directly from vendors, warehouses, and fulfillment centers, instead of traditional stores, and the transportation implications of many trips to a store as opposed to delivery vans. He noted that most E-Commerce facilities are located near cities and highway corridors.

Mr. Phelan gave a list of recommendations from the report, including consideration of the analysis of a package delivery fee, working with partners to develop freight plans, incorporating delivery needs into "Complete Streets" standards, and amending zoning regulations.

Mr. Kashatus asked if there was any discussion on porch pirating. Mr. Phelan said that it was an issue, but it wasn't a transportation issue. He said that he expects that e-commerce retailers will start moving to a locker system, such as Amazon Hub Lockers.

Mr. Kashatus asked how lockers were different from going to a store, as lockers add traffic back to the system. Mr. Phelan said the lockers tend to be at places where people tend to stop at anyway, such as pharmacies and convenience stores.

Mr. Arnold said they have seen lockers implemented in pedestrian areas and university campuses and could be similarly helpful in urban areas. PennDOT is limited in what it can do regarding piracy, but it hasn't slowed e-commerce demand.

Mr. Murawski commended the thoroughness of the report, and said he liked the suggestions for airports. He said the keys to success for the fee goes to remedy the impact, and if it was bipartisan. If e-commerce vendors do push back, they are using the public transportation network, and they would also be affected if it fails. Mr. Phelan said that it is important that e-commerce vendors see tangible benefits, such as better workforce access to their sites.

Ms. Holton agreed that it is a very balanced report that captured many issues and potential trends.

Mr. Phelan said that he thinks the term e-commerce will disappear, and it will just become commerce.

Mr. Fred Strathmeyer said that an issue they have in Agriculture is warehouses popping up on Agricultural property, and the need to find vacant areas. He mentioned local planning in Chester County didn't consider agriculture while zoning boards are now dealing with odors and other issues, stressing the need for zoning guidance and foresight.

Mr. Pocius asked if there was a demographic aspect to what drives e-commerce, such as assisted living, and stressed the need for improved zoning. Mr. Phelan said even if there was no e-commerce there would still be more warehouses due to population and commercial activity growth.

Ms. Oyler said that a finding of the Truck Parking Survey was the high cost of land near population centers, where this report found that warehouses want to be.

ON A MOTION by Mr. Murawski, seconded by Mr. Wagenmann and unanimously approved, The Transportation and Land Use Implications of E-commerce Study was approved for consideration at the February 2025 STC Meeting.

Studies Update:

Socioeconomic Trends Impacting Transportation Workforce Study

Mr. Keith Chase from Gannett Fleming gave a status update on the demographics study.

Mr. Chase said that the study would be ready for the April meeting. There is a transportation workforce problem, and that problem spills over into other sectors and activities dependent on transportation. In February, the team will develop preliminary findings, and bring an initial report to the task force in March.

Key takeaways so far are that there is a substantial transportation workforce gap that will worsen if unaddressed, and that it will cause cascading impacts for other sectors and the public at large. Drivers/vehicle operators, mechanics and maintenance are heavily impacted. Public sector wages aren't competitive with private, and "poaching" is a problem.

Mr. Strathmeyer asked if language barrier is an issue in the workforce. Mr. Chase said that it is in the notes to potentially be included in the report.

Study Topic Selection

Mr. Funkhouser from Michael Baker gave an update on the study topic selection.

Mr. Funkhouser said they are resetting the process, as most recommendations were tabled or removed, mostly due to duplicated efforts. He noted that projects don't have to be large studies, but could also be research and white papers, analysis and evaluation, or seminars and workshops.

The deadline to submit is February 17. The prioritization survey will be sent in March, and the topic finalized in late March, for approval at the April meeting. TAC will focus on one topic for 2025.

Ms. Holton said the TAC has done a great job of picking timely, impressive studies, and that it is important to not duplicate efforts.

Mr. Murawski asked if the consulting team could look at older studies and see if any recommended a further study on a subject.

Mr. Phelan said that AASHTO was looking at six topics at a national level, and two of those are truck parking, and land use and e-commerce.

Study Implementation Updates

None

MEMBER UPDATES:

None.

OTHER BUSINESS:

None.

Adjournment

ON A MOTION by Mr. Wagenmann, seconded by Mr. Pocius, and unanimously approved, the TAC meeting was adjourned at 12:02 p.m.