

PENNSYLVANIA STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
BUSINESS MEETING
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA
JUNE 14, 2023



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

CALL TO ORDER:

Honorable Ron Drnevich convened the quarterly business meeting of the State Transportation Commission (STC) at 10:08 a.m. on June 14.

ROLL CALL:

Commissioners Present:

1. Honorable Ron Drnevich
2. Honorable James Kingsborough
3. Honorable Marty Flynn, Mr. Justin Gensimore, Alternate Present

Commissioners Present on the Phone:

1. Honorable Sharon Knoll
2. Honorable Paige Willan
3. Honorable Karen Michael, P.E.

Commissioners Not Present:

1. Honorable Michael B. Carroll
2. Honorable Ed Neilson
3. Honorable Kerry Benninghoff
4. Honorable Wayne Langerholc, Jr.

MINUTES:

ON A MOTION by Mr. James Kingsborough, and seconded by Ms. Paige Willan, and unanimously approved, the February 22, 2023, STC business meeting minutes were accepted.

CHAIR'S REMARKS:

Honorable Ron Drnevich welcomed Commissioners and guests to the STC meeting. Mr. Drnevich noted that he would be running the meeting, as the Chair was unable to attend due to the recent bridge collapse on I-95.

Mr. Drnevich noted this was the first regional meeting held since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. He welcomed new Commissioner Representative Ed Neilson and new PennDOT Deputy Secretaries Kara Templeton, Michael Rebert, and Meredith Biggica,

Mr. Drnevich noted the efforts of Mr. Mark Murawski and the WATS MPO for setting up the site visit that some members attended before the meeting.

Ms. Cheryl Moon-Sirianni thanked everyone for their efforts and support in the I-95 collapse. She noted that there have been too many of these issues in the past few years, but it has taught PennDOT how to respond quickly to get things running again. She acknowledged the driver who lost his life in the collapse and the family.

Mr. Larry Shifflet welcomed questions about the collapse, noted PennDOT's diligence in times of crisis.

Ms. Moon-Sirianni reiterated PennDOT's dedication to getting the bridge operational again. She noted that it carries 170,000 vehicles daily, and that safety and speed in rebuilding are the primary goals. She acknowledged the high quality of the workforce and community of the Transportation Industry in Pennsylvania.

12-YEAR TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM:

Deputy Secretary Larry Shifflet presented the 2023 12-Year Transportation Program (TYP) adjustments stating that between January 28, 2023, and May 26, 2023, there were 1,752 program adjustments, including:

- 632 Project/Phase Additions
- 943 Project/Phase Changes
- 177 Project/Phase Removals (temporary or permanent)

Mr. Shifflet said the overall changes represent a **\$1,005,620,802** increase for the reporting period.

Mr. Shifflet noted the Carbon Reduction Program line item appearing in Adams County and many MPO areas. He stated that these are new funds originating from the BIL.

Mr. Shifflet focused on several projects in DVRPC including Newtown's Business Commons Sidewalk Connection (MPMS #118390), a multimodal project estimated at \$1.1 million. He also highlighted the I-95 PA Turnpike Stage 2 Project (MPMS #119730), a three-phase project consisting of Final Design, Right-of-Way, and Construction of six new interchange ramps and widening from two to three lanes in each direction. He noted that the Turnpike is funding this project, however, it needed to be included due to regional importance.

Mr. Shifflet also highlighted the Great Streets Philadelphia project (MPMS #119437), a \$25 million project funded through a federal award made possible by BIL.

ON A MOTION by Mr. James Kingsborough and seconded by Ms. Sharon Knoll, the 2023 12-Year Program Adjustments were approved.

REPORTS

Transportation Advisory Committee

Mr. Mark Murawski stated that the TAC did not hold its last meeting but had approved the Annual Report and Transportation Performance Report at the February meeting. He also provided an update on the two studies previously selected, Truck Parking and Local Match, that officially started in May.

Mr. Murawski said the Truck Parking study would look at the priority corridors with truck parking capacity issues. The recommendations from the study will be a hallmark component of the next freight plan.

Mr. Murawski explained that the Local Match study will investigate local governments' barriers to matching local transportation funds. Many of these localities have tax-exempt institutions that affect the tax base. The study will examine 5-7 communities to explore the issues.

Mr. Murawski pressed the need for a viable implementation aspect of the studies. The stakeholders must take action, as the TAC cannot implement their suggestions. He referred to the State Aviation Strategic Investment Plan, the state's first comprehensive aviation study with 40 recommendations. He stated that most people on the task force were not TAC members, but people in the industry who would need to do the "heavy lifting" of implementation. He said he also hopes for comprehensive legislation to address some of the recommendations in the future.

Ms. Moon-Sirianni noted the anticipation for the results of the studies, especially Truck Parking, and she would be looking for funding opportunities and ways to help. She thanked the TAC for the timely study.

Executive Deputy Secretary

Ms. Moon-Sirianni thanked the STC for their support and patience. She stated that the districts are working extremely hard, attaching the IJA funds to the necessary projects, and completing them rapidly. She said that supply chain issues and inflation have made things more difficult. She says that more grants will be coming in, and there are already plans to get those funds out as quickly as possible.

Ms. Moon-Sirianni detailed struggles with the workforce and efforts to reach out to trade schools to create a "transportation path" to grow the workforce in both PennDOT and the transportation industry.

Ms. Moon-Sirianni stated that some of the available grants would require innovation in the project delivery process, and PennDOT will be looking at adding tools via both legislation and innovation.

Administrative/Budget

Deputy Secretary Mr. Corey Pellington highlighted recommendations from the HR Summit. The Office of Administration has reorganized HR functions, granting PennDOT a dedicated HR office to be established in the Fall of 2023. There is a review ongoing to streamline and speed up the hiring process to fill vacancies.

Mr. Pellington stated that PennDOT is working to expand the Small and Disadvantaged Business program, holding forums in May with partners to set goals for the next triannual period, 2024-2026. There will be a 30-day public comment period, and final submissions are due October 1, 2023.

Mr. Pellington noted that severe weather had damaged several facilities recently, including the District 10 office. The office is expected to be operational by the end of summer or the beginning of fall.

Driver and Vehicle Services

Deputy Secretary Ms. Kara Templeton delivered a report for Driver and Vehicle Services. As codified by Act 107 of 2022, PennDOT was given ten (10) months to end and rescind driving permission suspensions for certain non-highway violations. PennDOT implemented the changes and came into compliance on April 16, well before the end of the provided period. She said that 151,000 individuals were provided relief.

Ms. Templeton stated that Act 89 requires that numerous vehicle and driver licensing fees are based on the Consumer Price Index and must be adjusted biannually. The next required fee increase is scheduled for July, and PennDOT began mailing updated renewal notices in April.

Ms. Templeton spoke about the Staggered Apportioned Registration, Act 90 of 2022. This legislation directs PennDOT to establish a method by which fleet owners can divide their vehicle registration renewal dates, rather than handling all registrations at the same time. Ms. Templeton stated that this will be available by the end of 2023 for fiscal year 2024-2025.

Ms. Templeton stated that PennDOT has completed the redesign of twelve dealer and miscellaneous vehicle registration plates. Dealers were informed of the change in August of 2022 and were required to justify the number of plates they requested. She stated that 98% of plates have been reissued.

Ms. Templeton spoke about obscured license plate guidance. As of Act 112 of 2022, it is unlawful to cover a plate with a tinted plate cover. Inspection stations were informed in February that vehicles using a tinted cover would not pass inspection.

Ms. Templeton stated that PennDOT has issued 1.97 million REAL IDs, with an opt-in rate of 19.4%.

Ms. Templeton spoke about the local use fee, which allows counties to add a \$5 fee to vehicle registration. Twenty-five counties are participating, raising \$232 million for local transportation projects to date.

Mr. Drnevich asked about changes in registration prices for electric vehicles. Ms. Templeton clarified that this is a proposed change that requires legislative action.

Ms. Willan asked if it was already the case that a vehicle would fail inspection if the license plate was obscured by damage or wear. Ms. Templeton explained that inspection stations could request a free replacement for the customer for a defaced plate.

Highway and Bridge Program

Mr. Eric High gave a report on the Highway and Bridge Program. He stated that bridges in poor condition are at a 15-year low. Inflation has impacted bids by 15-20% over the last two years. This could cause the number of poor-condition bridges to increase after 2025 but may be offset by Motor License Fund budget adjustments regarding the State Police. The number of fair-condition bridges is also increasing.

Mr. High spoke on the Statewide Pavement Condition graph. The number of poor-condition roads has remained stable but is projected to rise due to inflation. Additional funds could also be used to keep the road conditions stable.

Mr. High showed that while the 5-year average of fatalities has decreased over the last ten (10) years, the average has increased slightly to 1,157 for 2018-2022. The Department continues to implement systematic safety improvements such as roadway delineation, rumble strips, high-tension cable median barriers, and roadway improvement for areas with high crash rates.

Mr. High stated that the mild winter produced \$55 million in cost savings, which will go into road maintenance. There has, however, been a 15% increase in rock salt prices above last year.

Mr. High showed that the price of asphalt and gasoline has doubled since 2020 but stabilized early this year.

Mr. High stated that 90% of project lettings are on-time. Less than the goal of 50% of projects are within the cost estimate, however. This is due largely to inflationary impacts. Construction is often behind schedule due to workforce issues.

Mr. High stated 73% of projects constructed were within 103% of the bid amount. The average cost overrun in the last four quarters was 2.55%. The net overrun was \$47.4 million, but 5 of the 147 overrunning projects comprised over half of the total overrun. The largest amount was for the redesign of several structures after finding worse-than-expected deterioration.

Mr. High explained that the Department had let 197 projects in the first quarter of 2023, totaling approximately \$710 million.

Ms. Willan asked about recreational trails that cross highways in unmarked and unprotected ways, and if PennDOT is working with DCNR to improve these crossings.

Ms. Moon-Sirianni responded that there are coordinators, but if there are specific issues, let us know and we will follow up.

Multimodal Transportation

Deputy Secretary Meredith Biggica stated that she would let her report stand but would highlight the sustainability of the Shared Ride Program. A study looking at this was pushed back to late summer.

Ms. Biggica highlighted some things not in the report. The Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Public Transportation Performance Report is on the PennDOT website, and reports on operating data, AMTRAK, and grant programs. She hopes that there will be an update on the Corridor ID program.

Office of Planning

Deputy Secretary Larry Shifflet stated that the Planning Partners and PennDOT are months ahead of schedule in the TYP update process. Expected funding includes the Governor's proposed budget, returning \$100 million of the \$500 million from the State Police in 2023-2024, and \$100 million each year thereafter until reaching zero. To enact the plan, the legislature's assistance will be needed with the budget.

Mr. Shifflet stated that the March 1st liquid fuels allocation was \$470.2 million, up from last year. Allocated amounts will not reach the \$600 million of previous years in the foreseeable future. \$447.2 million has been distributed to 2,402 municipalities.

Mr. Shifflet said there is a current round of the Statewide Transportation Alternatives Set-aside Program open as of May 30, with final applications due September 15. There will be about \$28 million available statewide.

Mr. Shifflet gave an update on the P3 Major Bridge Program. Package 1 included six of the nine candidate bridges and is moving forward. The remaining bridges will be delivered via other means.

WORKING SESSION

District 3-0 Presentation

Mr. Eric High, P.E., Mr. Gerald Wertz, P.E., and Mr. Matt Beck, P.E., gave a presentation regarding PennDOT District 3. District 3 contains nine counties, 999 employees, 2,900 state-owned bridges and 4,500 miles of State-owned roadway.

The District reported improvements in the number of fatalities, road roughness, and percentage of poor-condition bridges. Numbers remained stable for the percentage of poor IRI roadways.

Roadway challenges include funding and embankment failures. There are 37 active embankment failures, ten of which have caused lane or roadway closures. Projects for 21 failures are unfunded, with an estimated construction cost of \$40M.

District 3 has spent more on construction contracts in 2022 and 2023 than in previous years, mainly due to the Central Susquehanna Valley Transportation Project (CSVT). Lettings are up from \$114M in 2019 to \$239.5M in 2022 and \$280M projected for 2023. One hundred ten (110) projects will be let in 2023 encompassing 162 miles of highway projects including 122 miles of resurfacing, and 31 bridge projects, including 14 replacements.

The District focused on a few projects including the resurfacing and widening of 2.1 miles of Columbia County SR 339-06A, Lycoming County SR 220-193 bridge and barrier improvements, Montour County SR 80-129 bridge improvements, and Sullivan County SR 154-63S embankment stabilization.

For 2023, the District will also support general maintenance, including 75 miles of paving operations, 24,000 acres of mowing, 766,000 lineal feet of ditch cleaning, and 41,000 tons of patching and base repair.

The District highlighted the CSVT Project, adding 13 miles of new 4-lane highway containing four interchanges, 21 bridges, nine million cubic yards of earthwork, and an 800-acre footprint, with a \$938M estimated cost. \$432M of this cost is Federally funded, with \$506M from the State.

The project is split into two sections, a northern and a southern section. The north section's final construction contract is 99% complete, and the section has been open to traffic since July 2022. The opening of this section has reduced traffic in nearby communities, especially truck traffic.

The southern section's first of three construction contracts was awarded in May 2022, for earthwork and existing road reconfigurations. The contract is 25% complete, with earthwork completion anticipated for mid-2024. The other two construction contracts are scheduled to be let in late 2023 and late 2025/2026, with the section being open to traffic in 2027.

12-Year Program Public Outreach

Mr. Dan Keane presented the results of the 12-Year Program's Public Outreach Campaign. The 12-Year Program (TYP) is updated every two years, and the public is invited to give feedback.

The TYP successfully met its goal of 10,000 survey responses, and increased participant diversity and Online Public Forum participation.

The survey was active for longer than the comment period, and promotional material was proactively translated from English to Spanish and Mandarin. The TYP staffed pop-up events at the PA Farm Show and Auto Show, PA State Association of Township Supervisors, and Millersville University campus. In addition, staff handed out flyers to local businesses and community locations.

The Online Public Forum was held on April 12, with over 3,000 meeting participants and 80 questions received. The forum was live captioned in English and Spanish, with an ASL interpreter present. There was also a call-in option for audio participation.

At the close of the comment period, the Survey had gathered 10,573 responses, with 4,248 mapped issues. The Survey will remain open until September 30, 2023, as a pilot, to gauge its usefulness after the comment period. In addition, the percentage of participation for people under 25 years old more than doubled.

The highest priorities, as determined by the Survey, were Road Pavement, Bridges, and Walking, with walking increasing from 5th to 3rd place since the last survey. Other common priorities were Safety Initiatives, Environmental Sustainability, and Electric Vehicle Infrastructure.

The survey mapping component captured 2,284 roadway, 1,082 ped/bike, 378 bridge, 463 transit, and 41 freight issues, with 127 marked as addressed by an existing project.

The survey results can be found at TalkPATransportation.com, including all mapped issues.

COMMISSIONERS REPORT:

None.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Ms. Templeton followed up on the earlier question, stating that plates illegible through wear are not grounds for a vehicle to fail an inspection.

NEXT MEETING:

The next STC quarterly meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 13, 2023. This will also be a regional meeting, but the location had not yet been decided.

ADJOURNMENT:

ON A MOTION by Mr. James Kingsborough and seconded by Ms. Paige Willan, the STC quarterly meeting was adjourned at 12:15 p.m.