

PENNSYLVANIA STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
BUSINESS MEETING
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA
MAY 18, 2022



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:

Honorable Ronald J. Drnevich convened the quarterly business meeting of the State Transportation Commission (STC) at 10:01 a.m. on May 18, 2022.

ROLL CALL:

Commissioners Present on the Phone:

1. Honorable Michael Carroll, Ms. Meredith Biggica, Alternate Present
2. Honorable Ronald J. Drnevich
3. Honorable Sharon Knoll
4. Honorable Frank E. Paczewski
5. Honorable James D. Kingsborough
6. Honorable Wayne Langerholc, Jr. Mr. Nolan Ritchie, Alternate Present
7. Honorable Paige Willan
8. Honorable Tim Hennessey, Mr. Josiah Shelly, Alternate Present (At Roll Call)
9. Honorable Marty Flynn, Mr. Caleb Sisak, Alternate Present

Commissioners Not Present

1. Honorable Yassmin Gramian, Chair
2. Honorable Chad Amond

MINUTES:

ON A MOTION by Mr. Frank Paczewski and seconded by Mr. Jimmy Kingsborough, and unanimously approved, the February 16, 2022, STC business meeting minutes were accepted.

CHAIR'S REMARKS:

Mr. Ronald Drnevich welcomed Commissioners and guests to the STC meeting.

Acting Deputy Secretary for Highway and Bridge Program, Mr. Michael Keiser, P.E., gave brief opening remarks on behalf of Secretary Yassmin Gramian.

Mr. Keiser highlighted inflation and supply chain issues' impacts on the Department's operating cost. He noted that low bids for contracts have been coming in 10% to 15% higher than the department anticipated.

Mr. Keiser said that a meeting was held on May 12, 2022 with all partners to look at ways to better manage project estimates.

2021 12-YEAR TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM: By Larry Shifflet

Deputy Secretary Larry Shifflet presented the 2021 12-Year Transportation Program (TYP) adjustments stating that between January 29, 2022 and April 29, 2022, there were 1,472 program adjustments, including:

- 617 Project/Phase Additions
- 755 Project/Phase Changes
- 100 Project/Phase Removals (temporary or permanent)

Mr. Shifflet said that the overall changes represent a **\$716,831,842** increase for the reporting period. He noted the high increase for this reporting period is due to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL).

Mr. Shifflet highlighted ten (10) highway and bridge projects in the Southern Alleghenies Rural Planning Organization in Bedford County for a total amount of **\$13,100,647**.

Mr. Drnevich asked if all the BIL funds have been used?

Mr. Shifflet noted that the remaining BIL funding will be incorporated in fiscal year 2023. He added that more the funding will be reflected in the August reporting period.

ON A MOTION by Ms. Page Willan and seconded by Mr. Jimmy Kingsborough, the 2021 12-Year Program Adjustments were approved.

PA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION UPDATE:

Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)

TAC Chair, Ms. Jody Holton, AICP, noted that the TAC started work for the *PA Aviation Needs Assessment and Strategic Action Plan* study. The taskforce held a first meeting on April 27, 2022.

She noted that the *Automated Speed Enforcement* study team finalized the scope of work and a kickoff meeting was held on May 2, 2022.

Administration

Acting Deputy Secretary, Mr. Michael Keiser, P.E., gave an update on behalf of Acting Deputy Secretary for Administration Ms. Michelle Jennings.

Mr. Keiser said that PennDOT received approval to fill up to 583 Government Service Interns (GSI), 489 Engineering, Scientific and Technical Interns (ESTI), and 411 non-student maintenance for the summer employment program, putting the Department back at pre-pandemic staffing levels.

Mr. Keiser discussed the Mentor-Protégé Program, which kicked off on May 5, 2022. He noted that the Protégé, which are certified Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBEs) and Business Partner registered through Engineering Construction Management System (ECMS) will be paired with retired construction contractors with prior PennDOT/PA Turnpike contract work experience.

Mr. Drnevich asked if it easy to fill the intern positions?

Mr. Keiser answered no.

Mr. Hennessey commented about short staffing issues in Engineering District 6-0. He asked if other Districts are experiencing similar issues?

Mr. Keiser said that the department has a high number of vacancies for maintenance operators in all counties.

Mr. Hennessey asked if the difficulty to fill those vacancies is related to low pay?

Mr. Keiser said that it is combination of pay and shortage of Commercial Driver's License holders.

Mr. Myers added that the COVID-19 has exacerbated the problem. He noted that it is difficult for the Department to compete in urban areas where the demand for CDL holders is greater.

Driver and Vehicle Services

Deputy Secretary for Driver and Vehicle Services (DVS), Mr. Kurt Myers, gave an update about the Driver and Vehicle Services Deputate.

Mr. Myers said that the DVS is also experiencing high vacancies, mostly in the Philadelphia and surrounding areas. He noted that pay is a major factor.

Mr. Myers discussed the Translation of Knowledge Testing and Manuals in additional languages initiative. He explained that PennDOT sought and was awarded Federal grant funding to translate the CDL Manual into sixteen (16) additional languages. Mr. Myers also noted the initiative is driven by the changes in the Commonwealth's changing demographics.

Mr. Myers discussed the Modernized Vehicle and Driver License System (MVDLS).

He explained that the MVDLS is a project to replace the legacy mainframe Vehicle Registration System called CARATS (Commonwealth Automated Registration and Titling System).

Mr. Myers also talked about the State-to-State Verification Service (S2S), which provides jurisdictions with the means to electronically check other participating jurisdictions and determine if an applicant currently holds a driver's license or an identification (ID) card in another state.

Mr. Myers concluded his update noting that the federal enforcement date for REAL ID remains set on May 3, 2023. He added that there is been an uptick in customers demand for REAL ID cards in the past months.

Ms. Willan asked if the modernization efforts will allow people to get a new driver's license when they change their address instead of the address update paper card?

Mr. Myers said that individuals can request a duplicate after a change of address but there is a \$31.50 fee.

Ms. Willan said that perhaps the option should be better explained on the website to make people aware.

Mr. Drnevich commented about the maintenance of PennDOT's fleet.

Mr. Keiser said that the maintenance is coordinated with district offices.

Mr. Drnevich asked if PennDOT owns electric vehicles?

Mr. Keiser answered yes. He added that there are efforts to acquire more.

Ms. Fackler said that PennDOT currently owns 22 plug-in hybrids and 77 more have been ordered.

Mr. Drnevich asked if there is a wait time to acquire electric vehicles?

Ms. Fackler said yes.

Highway and Bridge Program

Acting Deputy Secretary Mr. Michael Keiser, P.E., gave an update about the Highway Administration Deputate.

Mr. Keiser said that workforce and supply chain issues continue to be a drag on the Department's operations.

Mr. Keiser said that the Department has let 268 projects for a total amount of \$ 1.28 billion. He noted that the initial estimate was \$1.21 billion.

Mr. Keiser noted low bids increases and high inflation have resulted in a 15% increase of the letting program budget.

Mr. Kingsborough asked if construction work has started for the Fern Hollow bridge?

Mr. Keiser answered that he is not sure if the reconstruction of the bridge is part of the current letting program.

Multimodal Transportation

Deputy Secretary for Multimodal Transportation, Ms. Jennie Louwerse, discussed the Pennsylvania Public Transportation Annual Performance Report, which was released in April this year. She noted that a summary of the report was shared with the STC.

Mr. Drnevich commented about COVID-19 pandemic related transit ridership decrease.

Ms. Louwerse said that Public Transit has seen a decrease in ridership in the past two years but funding from the federal relief packages have allowed transit agencies to continue to operate. She added that state funding for operating cost has increased because of the state funding mechanisms.

Ms. Louwerse noted that due to a reduction in aviation jet fuel usage, the Bureau is currently reviewing revenue streams and anticipates a \$1.5 million reduction in Aviation Development Grants.

Ms. Louwerse indicated that while much public transportation service has been restored, there is still reduced ridership from pre-pandemic levels. She added that extensive Teleworking limits how fast ridership can bounce back to pre-pandemic levels.

Ms. Willan asked if the Fixed Route Intelligent Transit System (FRITS) Program has generated any trends?

Ms. Louwerse said that the program is still in its infancy and there is not enough data yet to draw any conclusions.

Office of Planning

Deputy Secretary for Planning, Mr. Larry Shifflet, gave a brief update about his Deputate.

Mr. Shifflet said that the implementation of BIL is underway and the remaining four years of BIL funding will be incorporated into the draft 2023 12-Year Program, which is set to be presented to the STC in August this year. He added that the Transportation Improvement

Program (TIP) update public comments have started. Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs) are conducting Public comment meetings. Start and end dates for those meetings can be found on the STC website.

Mr. Shifflet said that Department could see an extra \$141 million due to the Governor's budget proposal to decrease the State Police funding from the Motor License Fund.

Mr. Shifflet discussed the Municipal Liquid Fuels Tax Fund, which were distributed on March 1, 2022, and the Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TASA) program announced on April 20, 2022. He noted that 64 projects were chosen worth a total of \$54.1 million.

WORKING SESSION:

STATEWIDE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD: By: Lugene Keys

Ms. Lugene Keys from McCormick Taylor gave an update on the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Update process.

Ms. Keys explained that work is underway for the development of the 2023 12-Year Transportation Program (TYP) document draft and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) update public comment periods for the 23 Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs) and Wayne County.

Ms. Keys said that PennDOT is also conducting its first public comment period for the STIP, which is comprised of the 26 TIPs. She noted that the 23 regional TIPs are developed locally by the MPOs and RPOs while the independent county, Interstate and Statewide Items Programs are developed by PennDOT.

2023 12-Year Program Update Process

Ms. Keys noted that a 45-day public outreach campaign, which included the launch of the online transportation survey and an online public forum in 2021, was conducted as part of the 2023 TYP update process. The draft document is being finalized, she added.

Statewide Transportation Improvement Program Update Process

Ms. Keys explained that each MPO and RPO submitted a draft TIP to PennDOT. PennDOT then reviewed the projects included on the individual draft TIPs to ensure that they meet statewide transportation priorities, fit within budget projections, and conform to air quality standards. Once the TIPs were reviewed, each MPO and RPO endorses their draft TIP after holding a 30-day public comment period – many of which are underway now.

Ms. Keys noted that the first TIP public comment period began on April 5, 2022 and the last TIP public comment period will conclude toward the end of June; after which PennDOT will incorporate the projects on the MPO and RPO TIPs in the draft STIP, which constitute the first four years of the TYP.

Ms. Keys said that in accordance with the Statewide Public Participation Plan, PennDOT will also be hosting the first Public Comment Period for the STIP from June 15 through June 30, 2022. She added that the draft STIP will be posted on the STC website along with a comment form for public review. Hard copies of the draft STIP will also be made available in other locations that are yet to be determined.

Ms. Keys mentioned that at the end of the 15-day STIP Public Comment Period, PennDOT will review, address, and document comments received. PennDOT will then submit the draft TYP to the STC for adoption on August 17, 2022, and the final version of the STIP will be forwarded to Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, and the Environmental Protection Agency for federal review. The adopted 2023 TYP and the federally-approved STIP will be posted on the STC website.

Ms. Keys noted that the 2023 TYP will use a similar format to the 2021 digital and print TYP. For the 2023 TYP, the Projects section will be moved up so that this information appears after the Funding section. She added that updates are being made to the interactive project map with new search functionalities. Also, the Team is also looking at new publicity opportunities, such as advertising on 511PA website.

Ms. Keys explained that as part of the advertisement opportunities, PennDOT coordinated with the 511PA Team to use their ad space as part of the outreach campaign. The ads were developed to promote the upcoming public comment periods, she added.

Public Comment Periods: April 5 – July 18, 2022

Ms. Keys reminded that the regional TIPs can be accessed on the STC website, *TalkPATransportation.com*. She noted that the 30-day TIP comment periods, which began in April, will continue through July. Each TIP is linked to a map on the TIP webpage. The dates of each comment period appear when the user hovers over a region. Each region will change color based on the status of the comment period, Ms. Keys said.

Ms. Keys concluded her update noting that the STIP public review and comment period strategy was devised to align with the 2020 Statewide Public Participation Plan. She added that a static STIP Process Infographic was developed to serve as a visual educational tool for the public.

COMMISSIONERS REPORT:

Mr. Hennessey asked if the BIL funding can be used to for pothole maintenance?

Mr. Keiser said that the federal funds cannot be used for pothole maintenance.

OTHER BUSINESS:

None

NEXT MEETING:

The next STC quarterly meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, August 17, 2022.**

ADJOURNMENT:

ON A MOTION by Mr. Jimmy Kingsborough and seconded by Ms. Page Willan, the STC quarterly meeting was adjourned at 11:27 a.m.

FOLLOWUPS:

Paige Willan asked that DVS review the website information concerning address changes since it wasn't clear that you could receive a duplicate product for a fee with the address change as opposed to the free address change card we issue. Language was added to the website that states: You may also choose to obtain a duplicate non-commercial license or Photo ID for a fee at the time of your address change. Your duplicate product will be issued with the corrected address. Duplicate fees are only applicable when applying for an updated physical product.