

Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission
Minutes of the Meeting of
August 22, 2005
Regional Enterprise Tower - 425 Sixth Avenue - Pittsburgh, PA 15219
4:30 p.m.

The fiftieth meeting of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission was called to order by Chairman, Dave Coder.

Commission members present were: Karen Bennett, Bracken Burns, Eric Carlson, H. Daniel Cessna, Dave Coder, James Gagliano, Jr., David Johnston, James Kennedy, Phil Light, Larry Maggi, Robbie Matesic, Kevin McCullough, David Miller, Larry Morris, Henry Nutbrown, Andrew Quinn, Carmen Rozzi, Bernie Smith, Pam Snyder, Anthony Spossey, and Norma Wintermyer.

Commission members absent were: Glenn Anderson, Tom Balya, Andrew Boni, Susan Borinsky, Charles Camp, Orlando Capretto, Tom Ceraso, James Cheatham, Steven Craig, Robert DeLotto, Dan Donatella, Richard Fink, Edward Fosnaught, David Frick, John Gardner, Susan Golomb, Joseph Hardy, Dana Henry, Richard Hogg, C. L. Jabbour, Ellen Kight, Larry King, Patricia Kirkpatrick, Allen Kukovich, Scott Lowe, Terry McMillen, Tom Murphy, Dan Onorato, William Peduto, Rodney Ruddock, Daniel Santoro, James Scahill, Mark Schneider, Richard Shaw, Michael Silvestri, Paul Skoutelas, Mark Snyder, Joe Spanik, Byron Stauffer, Jr., Joe Szczur, Sala Udin, Vince Vicites, Daniel Vogler, Gealy Wallwork, Joseph Widmer, Charles Zappala, and Angela Zimmerlink.

Others: Lucinda Beattie, Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership; Georgia Berner, Berner International; Mitchell Clem Cohen, Citizen; Michael Edwards, Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership; Dave Ginns, Sustainable Pittsburgh; Lynn Heckman, Allegheny County Department of Economic Development; Marilyn Skolnick, Sierra Club; Jon Smith, Allegheny County Transit Council; and John Verbanac, SPC Consultant.

Staff: Jim Hassinger, Mary Brangan, Kirk Brethauer, Stan Caldwell, Jennifer Cloonan, Chuck DiPietro, Linda Duffy, Chuck Imbrogno, Vince Massaro, Marge Nalesnick, Shannon O'Connell, Debbie Tritsch, Carol Uminski and Sara Walfoort.

1. Action on Minutes of the July 20th Meeting

The minutes of the July 20, 2005 meeting of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission were approved on a motion by Mr. Nutbrown which was seconded by Mr. Spossy. The affirmative vote was unanimous.

2. Public Comment

None.

3. Financial Report

Mr. Massaro presented the combined revenue and expense statement for the twelve-month period ending June 30, 2005. The numbers are unaudited at this time. The total project related revenues were \$7,624,345 or 80% of the revised annual budget of \$9,516,493. The revenues recognized pertain to the UPWP and the economic development program activities and are inline with the budget for this reporting period. A number of planning projects will carry over to Fiscal Year 05-06. These carry-over projects total \$1.3 million. These projects have been approved by PennDOT and other funding agencies. The revenues related to the Regional Enterprise Tower and budgeted for rents are \$5,049,020. Rents collected total \$4,699,665 or 93% of the budget. As of June 30, the building is at 83% occupancy. The leasing agent, GVA Oxford Development, is currently negotiating with a number of prospective tenants, and it is expected by the end of September that the occupancy number should be about 87%. Overall project related expenditures of the UPWP and the economic development program activities continue to report as budgeted. The total expenses are \$7,627,870 or 80% of the revised annual budget of \$9,516,493. Expenses related to the operations of the Regional Enterprise Tower before depreciation and amortization are \$4,637,009 versus the annual budget of \$4,853,470 or 96%.

Mr. Massaro mentioned that the auditors were in around the beginning of July to start preliminary work on the annual audit. The actual field work will begin September 19. The audit is expected to be completed by the end of October or beginning of November.

4. PA MAP Aerial Photography

Mr. Brethauer reported that the PA MAP project will take place in our region next year. This is part of the USGS National Map which is a digital/GIS map based on the best available data. The data now available for viewing online is county-to-county data and this will now allow state-to-state viewing. Pennsylvania is a "pilot" state. This program is a partnership between Federal, State and counties. The key components include aerials, elevation, roads, hydrology, and land use. Funding is provided by USGS and the State. Due to the expense of this project, the State is photographing one-third of Pennsylvania each year to complete a 3-year cycle. In reference to the State map, Mr. Brethauer pointed out that the different shaded areas referred to the different programs and years of updates to imagery and the total picture gives the status of photography since 2000. The planning map for 2006 showed the 21 counties planned for orthophotographs beginning next Spring. It will be a year-long process. All orthophotographs, digital elevation data, scanned photos, and processing (AT) reports will be available free of charge to the counties. In addition, other products that can be used by county and/or municipality contractors for data development, including tax parcels, street centerlines, and buildings. Optional product buy-ups are for counties or communities that need additional accuracy, i.e. higher resolution imagery, etc. Counties have the ability to piggyback on this contract to get other products such as LiDAR, contours, infrared imagery, etc. Currently, a contractor and DCNR are determining the costs regarding the buy-up schedule. Everything should be in place by early Winter and agreements and funding should be in place by early Spring 2006. The planning departments and regional partners have already been notified. The budgets are being finalized with the DCNR and the State and the buy-ups are being secured. The next time western Pennsylvania will be photographed will be in 2009.

In response to a question asked by Mr. Miller, Mr. Brethauer replied that they were looking into the costs to see if it made sense to advance on a buy-up fashion.

Mr. Burns asked how this fit in with the GIS proposals on the State level and inquired if the standards were completed yet. Mr. Brethauer said that the second version of the sharing standards was just completed and the sharing standards are in place. It's in guidebook form and State agencies are also working on a State GIS Action Plan. This photography would complement those standards.

5. Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership

Mr. Hassinger introduced Mr. Michael Edwards as the new Executive Director of the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership.

Mr. Edwards explained the history, vision and mission, and operations of the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership highlighting their lines of business, advocacy & public policy, planning & design, enhanced municipal services, marketing downtown, transportation & parking, economic development and strategic partnerships.

Mr. Edwards commented that with SPC as the regional agency for transportation and economic development, the PDP truly believes that downtown is an important part of our region's economy. He pointed out that downtown would not be successful if we did not have robust and healthy neighborhoods and neighboring counties and neighboring commercial districts. He said that everything that they are doing downtown has application in the downtowns within our counties and everything they're learning they would be happy to share with the county leaders in their business districts. The PDP wants to collaborate and be part of the regional discussion.

Commissioner Coder welcomed Westmoreland County's newest commission member, Phil Light.

6. Regional Indicators Project

Mr. Craig reported that about a year ago they asked about 100 people attending a meeting "Would you like to know what's going on around here". The reply was an overwhelming yes! As he looked around the room at that meeting, he saw that there were all sorts of information available about transportation and other aspects of the region. He identified about eight different areas of concern, one of which was health and one was transportation. There were two economic concerns: 1) the State and the Pittsburgh economy; and 2) the economic conditions of Pittsburgh. There was also one on the environment. Mr. Craig said if he were to choose three or four things in the transportation area of concern that he felt were very important, they would be: 1) the condition of bridges and roads; 2) congestion; 3) use of the airport; and 4) use of the Port of Pittsburgh in freight. Look at the context of this information, the information under the rules of the game – who should be involved – Department of Engineering, Department of Public Policy, Pitt's Department of Public Health – who has a vested interest. Process the information over 10 years and look at what's happening on a continuing basis. In this area, who do we want to compare southwestern Pennsylvania to? We have not made a decision yet as to whom we want to compare ourselves to, but in the area of transportation we're disproportionate in Greater Pittsburgh in the State of Pennsylvania. When you're comparing Pittsburgh through environmental lines, it's a very different Pittsburgh than the one when you talk about the Pittsburgh for transportation or when

you talk about the Pittsburgh for economics. In the case of the Pittsburgh watershed, it crosses at least three States. Mr. Craig referred to a map with shaded areas covering ten counties in southwestern Pennsylvania, three counties in Ohio, and six counties in West Virginia. This he explained was the “real Pittsburgh”. This is the Pittsburgh where the *Post-Gazette* sells newspapers. This is the Pittsburgh of Steeler season ticket holders. This is the Pittsburgh where people come from to attend the symphony, where people come to our airport to get on a plane. It is a “city-state”. This wider area is now defined by the Commerce Department as the Greater Pittsburgh economic region. So when we look at the economy of Pittsburghers and at the economic conditions of Pittsburgh, this is the area we look at. When we look at this over 10 years, we can also be able to compare it to other places that may not have three states involved. Back from the beginning when we started to track this information, this area has changed four times. How does this compare to what it used to be 10 years ago? People can’t tell because the information was not available. This will be an ongoing project for the next two to three years.

Mr. Burns asked if from the planning and reporting aspect, is the region reported the 10-county region. Mr. Craig responded by saying that this is the city-state of Pittsburgh and the 10-county region is not out of line. Mr. Burns said that he was totally on board with broader regionalism beyond the central area alone.

7. Transportation Reauthorization Bill (SAFETEA-LU)

Mr. Kevin McCullough explained that the SAFETEA-LU Act was passed by Congress on July 29. It was signed into law on August 10 by President Bush. It is a six-year bill. There is \$295 billion in budget authority for Federal Fiscal Years 04-09. Of that, \$286.4 billion is guaranteed which is a 38% increase in guaranteed spending over TEA-21 which was \$208 billion. Looking at five years which is approximately what we have left with the Federal Fiscal Year beginning October 1, there is \$193.2 billion for highways and \$52.6 billion for transit. Pennsylvania’s share has an average over the six years of \$1.646 billion of which \$263 million represents a 19% increase above average annual funding under TEA-21. This represents about 4.5% of the national total. Nationally, there are 6,376 projects earmarked for a total of \$24 billion. Earmarks for Pennsylvania include 376 highway projects totaling \$621.4 million, 43 transit bus and bus facilities totaling \$79.2 million, and new fixed guideway capital projects.

On the highway side, there are six core programs, five of which are carryover programs. New programs for highways include Equity Bonus which replaces the minimum guarantee and increases it from at least 90.5 percent in 2005 to 92 percent by 2008 of contributions to the Highway Account of the Highway Trust Fund; Highway Safety Improvement Program with \$5.0 billion apportioned for funding with distributions of 1/3 lane miles, 1/3 VMT, and 1/3 fatalities on Federal aid highways; and Safe Routes to School which guarantees \$1 million to improve child pedestrian safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption and air pollution in the vicinity of schools. There will also be some community education and information on highway safety. There are also some environmental streamlining items. Regarding construction and contract efficiency there is a new Highways for LIFE Pilot Program with eligible costs up to 20% of the project, not to exceed \$5 million. For transit, the TEA-21 structure is maintained with funding and formula apportionment increases and there are also five new programs for transit. Tolling provisions continued from TEA-21 include Value Pricing Pilot Program and congestion pricing pilot projects. New tolling provisions include an Express Lanes Demonstration Program and an Interstate System Construction Toll Pilot Program.

In summation there are a lot of opportunities and challenges. As a State, we did see a nice increase on the transit side. Pennsylvania is to receive 23% more than TEA-21 provided, yet a gap between needs and funds still remains. And we still have to deal with the challenge of expansion versus system preservation.

8. Corps of Engineers Flood Damage Reduction Program

Commissioner Rozzi explained that in seven watershed areas there are sixteen flood control reservoirs. There are a series of towns with 100 lines underneath them that are flood retention projects. With these reservoirs and the flood of 1996 in downtown Pittsburgh and then again last year on September 17 and in May in Beaver Falls we had systems that just sat on the top of Pittsburgh that dumped anywhere from 6 to 8 inches of rain right on the City. There were no reservoirs to catch that water.

We have essentially four programs based on different levels of magnitude. The first two are called continuing authority programs. Section 14 - Stream Bank Protection Program allows us to construct, repair and restore eroded stream banks and shorelines. All projects must be both economically and environmentally feasible. Some projects range in value from \$100,000 they are cost shared on a certain percentage - 65 federal / 35 local - for flood damage reduction. The next program is Section 205 - Local Flood Reduction Program. Projects cannot exceed \$5 million. With a 65 / 35 cost share, a total project cost would be \$7.65 million. A third program is a special authorization given to a certain region. This region's program is Section 581 and covers West Virginia and Pennsylvania flood control. This is handled by a regional authority and we cannot budget for it on a yearly basis. The fourth program is the General Investigation Program. These are for projects that don't have anything of value. A recent project that was just completed here was partnered with the City of Pittsburgh. It was a \$22 million project that was cost shared on a 65 / 35 basis over a ten-year period.

There are two Acts of Congress for the Army Corps of Engineers, the first is authorizing legislation. The House and the Senate are trying to pass what is known as the Water Resources Development Act, which is similar to the SAFETEA-LU for the Metropolitan Planning Organizations. They try to pass them every two years, however the last one was in 2000. It's always a challenge for this region to come up with sponsors for funding. He said it was a pleasure meeting with SPC and he looks forward to continuing these discussions.

Mr. Nutbrown asked if the Corps has issued any special report. Mr. Rozzi said that they have been trying for a number of years to get a special report. He understands it must be a State issue and special legislation. Governor Rendell has asked the President to get the national authority for the Corps of Engineers to assist. Mr. Burns mentioned that in viewing the map that there is in essence no flood control in the primary rivers to say nothing of the streams in the entire Pittsburgh region, shouldn't there be, isn't this why we're being flooded on a regular basis if we don't have any way of controlling Mother Nature? Mr. Rozzi replied that not necessarily. There are projects on the books that have never gone through. Mr. Burns said that it seems there is nothing in the Pittsburgh region. With the three rivers coming in and the tributaries to them, it seems that the flood control is somewhat distant. Mr. Rozzi said that when you look at the geography they take all that into effect. So when you get into some type of watershed study for either river basins or reservoirs that all go down, that's going to expand to five or six. As an example for the Pine Creek Watershed, there's talk about turning North Park into a flood control project. Mr. Rozzi also

said that hopefully a watershed study would identify that. Mr. Burns asked if we were going to have this watershed study. Mr. Rozzi said that if the Water Resources Development Act passes there would be authorization for flood damage protection for Western Pennsylvania. A lot of it is up to the constituents to get this. That's all in the first step of authority. Then it goes to the appropriations department to initiate. That comes on a yearly basis for a water appropriations bill. Those are the two things that have to happen. If due to an emergency and there is a lot of property damage it could attract a lot of interest in that. Mr. Burns said that with the frequency and severity of flooding in the Pittsburgh region on the increase, you would think something more aggressively would be done. Mr. Rozzi agreed. He said every one of those reservoirs refers back to the spreadsheets that talk about the benefits of flood damage reductions on downstream communities. Each of the reservoirs has some type of benefit to the region. Nine are on the Allegheny, three are on the Monongahela and they all protect downtown Pittsburgh.

9. Public Participation Panel / Project Region Update

Mr. DiPietro reported that over the past six weeks eleven public meetings were convened. They are a part of Project Region to involve more people and help move ahead the TIP update. SPC's various planning partners actively participated with information stations, including individual transit authorities, county and city planning departments, PennDOT District staff and SPC staff. SPC's touch screen instant survey was also used for input to Project Region. Everyone at the meeting had the chance for feedback, for one-on-one conversations, and submission of testimony. The attendance was very good with over 300 attendees. We are now in the process of compiling input received at the meetings. Comments were received at the meetings or sent by e-mail. The response to the meeting format was very good. This information and testimony will be used for the State Transportation Commission public hearing to be held in the Regional Enterprise Tower on September 23. Secretary Biehler will chair the State Transportation Commission at a public hearing here all day and each of SPC's Public Participation Panels has a time slot to present the findings of the eleven public meetings. Commissioner Coder added that the interactive format seemed to work especially well in Greene County with much larger than previous participation and very positive response to the format of the meetings.

10. Environmental Justice Report

Ms. Walfoort presented the Final Draft Report on Environmental Justice activities. Environmental Justice is a federal mandate designed to ensure nondiscrimination in federal programs. The three primary goals of Environmental Justice, as related to transportation planning and programming, are to: a) avoid, minimize or mitigate disproportionately high adverse impacts on minority and low-income populations; b) ensure the full and fair participation of all communities in the transportation decision-making process; and c) prevent the denial of, or delay of, the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.

SPC conducted a demographic analysis using US Census data to identify the location of minority and low-income populations in the region. Census block groups having a higher than regional average of minority residents (9.9% or greater) or low-income residents (11.5% or greater) were identified as "Environmental Justice Communities." These EJ (and Non-EJ) communities were mapped using the SPC GIS system, and maps of transit service areas, the regional Transportation Improvement Program and the 2030 Long Range Plan transportation projects were overlaid on these maps to assess the distribution of project delivery in EJ and Non-EJ communities. 65% of

all mappable projects on the TIP and 70% of all mappable projects on the Long Range Plan were found to be located in or immediately adjacent to an EJ community, demonstrating that project delivery does not disproportionately favor Non-EJ communities. In terms of accessibility, it was found that EJ communities will see a greater increase in job accessibility than will Non-EJ communities following the implementation of the TIP and Long Range Plan projects. Again, no disproportionate benefit to Non-EJ communities, or burden to EJ communities was noted.

In the area of public involvement, SPC has taken steps to make technical documents more readable, through the use of less technical language. The website has been expanded, and now offers an instant translation service into 8 languages other than English. The Public Involvement Policy has been revised, and is currently out for public comment. SPC has initiated a program designed to encourage attendance at public meetings by holding meetings in more communities, and by selecting meeting locations that are familiar to community residents, such as schools and recreational centers

11. Other Business

The next meeting date is October 24, 2005 at 4:30 p.m.

12. Adjourn

There being no further business to come before the Commission the meeting adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dan Onorato
Secretary-Treasurer