

**INDIANA COUNTY  
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PANEL  
JULY 20, 2006**

Public Meeting to Collect Testimony on the 2007 – 2010 Draft Transportation Improvement Program, Air Quality Conformity Determination for the TIP, and the Long-Range Regional Plan Amendment Request

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**Meeting Held:**

Room 207, Indiana Junior High School  
245 North Fifth Street, Indiana, PA  
7:00 p.m., July 20, 2006

**In Attendance:**

Panel members:

Dana Henry, Indiana County Chamber of Commerce/ PPP Co-Chair  
Byron Stauffer, Jr., Indiana County Office of Planning and Development/PPP Co-Chair  
Terry Stiffler, Planning Commission  
Sandi Dill, Indiana County Community Action  
Penny Perman, Indiana County Tourist Bureau  
Mark Geletka, Indiana University of Pennsylvania  
Laurie Lafontaine, Cambria and Indiana Trail Council  
Ken Gabler, Borough of Indiana  
Larry Garner, White Township  
Linda Gwinn, Borough of Blairsville

Panel resource persons:

Joe Dubovi, PennDOT District 10-0  
Dave Cook, PennDOT District 10-0  
Vickie Kanyan, Indigo  
Jeff Raykes, Indiana County Office of Planning and Development

Other attendees:

Rod Ruddock, Indiana County Commissioner  
Bernie Smith, Indiana County Commissioner  
Angela Coulter  
Charles Fletcher, Conemaugh Township Supervisor  
John J. Samonick, White Township Resident  
Margaret Hopper, Indiana Gazette  
Linda Jones  
Mike Remael, Gorell  
Don Undercofler, DDS  
Michael Bertig, Renda Broadcasting

Dreama VanCise  
John Turack, BIG, Washington Township, Westmoreland County  
Hastie Kinter, Downtown Indiana

SPC Staff: Chuck DiPietro  
Sara Walfoort

### **Meeting notes:**

#### 1. Welcome and Introductions

PPP Co-chair Dana Henry opened the meeting, welcoming all attendees. He introduced himself as well as the SPC Staff, and a few other members of the audience. Indiana County Commissioners Rudduck and Smith were in attendance and each was also given the opportunity to welcome the meeting attendees. SPC staff member Chuck DiPietro was then introduced and the meeting was turned over to him so he could provide an overview of the TIP and Air Quality Conformity process as well as the Long Range Plan amendment request for the North Shore LRT project.

#### 2. Statement of Purpose of the Meeting

Chuck DiPietro started off by reinforcing that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the draft update of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission's TIP, Air Quality Conformity document and LRP amendment. This is not the meeting to testify for new projects to be added to the TIP.

#### 3. Basic Review of the TIP Update, Air Quality Conformity, and LRP Amendment Request

Mr. DiPietro then provided an overview of the process now underway to update the 2007-2010 Transportation Improvement Program. The TIP represents the highest priority transportation projects (both highway and transit) in the ten county southwestern region of Pennsylvania for federal fiscal years 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010. In the summer of 2005, the Public Participation Panel held a public meeting to receive testimony regarding candidate projects for consideration on the 2007-2010 TIP. The draft TIP has been under development since then and is now up for review. A 30-day comment period is being conducted June 27 through July 27, 2006 to provide the public with an opportunity to review the program information and submit comments to SPC and its planning partners. Comments may be submitted via oral comment at one of the ten public meetings, written comment, e-mail submission to (comments @ spcregion.org), completing the website response form at www.spcregion.org, by fax (412-391-9160) and/or by letter. Public comments are then reviewed and responded to as appropriate in a Public Participation Report: Response to Public Comment document prepared by SPC.

Other draft documents also offered for comment include the Air Quality Conformity Assessment of the draft 2007-2010 TIP and an amendment request to the 2030 Long Range Plan.

Air Quality Conformity Assessment is a requirement of the clean air act to demonstrate that the region would meet federal air quality standards with implementation of the projects in the TIP. Essentially, we must prove that by adopting the TIP, the quality of the air in the region will be improved.

The amendment request to the 2030 Plan is sponsored by Port Authority and revises the financial plan to the North Shore Connector LRT to a revised total project cost of \$435 million.

All of these proposed actions will be presented at the July 31, 2006 Commission meeting for consideration of approval. The 2007-2010 TIP Update, if approved, will replace the current TIP (2005-2008) program and become effective October 1, 2006.

Mr. DiPietro offered a glimpse of those Indiana County projects that are on the draft TIP, highlighting approximately \$3.5 million over four years for the daily operations, fleet replacements and garage equipment for Indigo, the local transit provider. The draft TIP also includes an estimated \$104.5 million over four years for highway and bridge projects in the county.

#### 4. Public Comment

Angela Coulter, Citizen

Ms. Coulter has been testifying since 1995 regarding the need for intersection improvements at SR2008 and SR 3013 in Homer City. This project is on the TIP, and she is pleased to see that it is. However, she intends to be persistent and continue to testify until the programmed improvements are complete.

The necessary improvements will remedy a vertical sight limitation on one leg of the intersection. Trucks approaching the intersection are invisible to vehicles desiring to turn onto SR3013 until the last minute. Efforts have been made to slow oncoming traffic to permit more response time at the top of the hill, but have been only marginally successful.

Project is included in the draft TIP through final design and construction in 2009.

Rod Ruddock, Indiana County Commissioner

The intersection of Route 217 and Route 22 is in need of attention now. The completion of proposed enhancements at the nearby sewage treatment plant will worsen problem.

Bernie Smith, Indiana County Commissioner

There is a safety concern along Route 119 North at Marion Center. The Township of East Mahoning, the Route 119 Improvement Association and the Marion Center School District share his concerns. Buses and other vehicles trying to turn in Marion Center slow the traffic behind them. Cars try to sneak around the buses, and accidents occur.

In response to this comment, Joe Dubovi of PennDOT District 10-0 reported that PennDOT will be using Surface Improvement funds to remedy this situation in the coming year.

Dreama VanCise, Resident

As a home health nurse, Ms. VanCise is concerned about the mobility options available to Indiana

County's elderly residents as they lose the right to drive. Being dependent on local transit options or the availability of friends or family to provide transportation makes it difficult for them to keep doctors appointments and other functions. Indigo is a good transit provider, but is limited in what it can provide in the way of transit services in rural areas. When options for the elderly or non-driving population are reduced to risk-taking (and driving when they shouldn't) or isolation, all the options are bad. People are sometimes forced into bad decisions, as may have been the case in a recent accident on Route 422, where someone was killed.

John Somonick, Resident

There is a parcel of property for sale at the intersection of Warren Road and Indian Springs Road (near Trader Horn). This parcel is of sufficient size to accommodate the right of way for a four lane road. This is a busy intersection, and eventually, it will be necessary to improve it. To avoid a situation like Rose Street, Mr. Somonick recommends that the County or PennDOT purchase this property now, while it is available and still undeveloped, to permit future intersection upgrades.

John Turack, Blairsville Main Street Manager

There is an urgent need to reduce truck traffic in downtown Blairsville. At present, northbound truck traffic travels through the southern half of Main Street (SR 217), then is forced to make a decision. Trucks having a height of less than 13'3" can proceed north along Main Street (SR217) to an intersection with SR 22 East or SR 22 West. At the end of each ramp connecting SR217 to SR 22, the ramp ends in a stop sign, requiring trucks to come back up to speed while traveling on SR 22. Trucks in excess of 13'3" in height are prevented from using this route to SR 22 by a low railroad overpass. These trucks must make a very sharp turn in the heart of downtown Blairsville, to make an alternate connection to SR 22. This is noisy, dirty, disruptive and unsafe.

In addition, SR 22 crosses the Conemaugh River in the immediate vicinity of Blairsville, and the highway corridor is flanked by two different bicycle trails, one on either side of the highway. PennDOT is asked to apply context sensitive design criteria when designing improvements to this section of the corridor, and to be aware of the probable need for two trail connections across SR 22 in the community.

Terry Stiffler, Cherry Hill Township Supervisor

Has concerns about safety along SR422 at North and South Harmony Roads (an offset intersection). Land uses in the immediate vicinity of the intersection include an ice cream shop, a golf course and a plant nursery. Vehicles may enter SR422 from North and South Harmony Roads (separated by about 100 ft. from each other). In addition, vehicles used in the operation of the plant nursery frequently cross SR 422 to get to and from nursery operations on the north and south sides of SR 422.

With traffic moving in many directions along a section of road with limited horizontal separations between the intersection legs and the informal movements of the nursery operations, vehicles sometimes move in erratic ways, heightening the risk of accidents. The through traffic on SR 422 is often moving at speed through this area, adding to the risk of accident with serious injury or death.

## 5. General Discussion

With no further comments for the record, the public testimony portion of the meeting was closed, and a general discussion period was opened. These comments are summarized briefly below.

Larry Garner, White Township

Had questions regarding the TIP Status Report. Was particularly pleased to see that the Rose Street project was advancing.

Dreama VanCise

Had questions regarding the location of air quality sensors in Indiana County, and the process of air quality monitoring in the County. As a member of the League of Woman Voters, she was interested in learning the process through which additional air quality monitors could be installed.

Byron Staffuer, Jr., Indiana County Office of Planning and Development

Reminded meeting participants that the SPC Commissioners had been asked on four occasions to “flex” highway money from local highway projects to support transit operations in the region. We need a better plan for transit funding than we have now. There is a new Commission at the state level that is reviewing the transit funding situation, and may come up with a solution. At the most recent vote to flex transit funds in the SPC region, the five Indiana County voting members of the SPC Board all voted “no.” Only Westmoreland County also voted against the transit flex, and then it was a split vote, with some Commission members from Westmoreland County voting for the flexing of these funds.

With the last public comment received and no other person wishing to speak, Vice-Chair Dana Henry closed the meeting at approximately 8:15 PM.