

WESTMORELAND COUNTY PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PANEL JULY 13, 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

Meeting Held:

Commissioners' Meeting Room, County Courthouse, Greensburg
6:00 p.m., Thursday, July 13th

In Attendance:

Panel members:

Terry Daughenbaugh, PPP Chair and Economic Growth Council
Bill Piper, PPP Vice-Chair and consultant to Westmoreland County
Brian Dombroske, Westmoreland County Area Agency on Aging
Lance Sokol, Southwest Pennsylvania Human Services
Alex Graziani, Smart Growth Partnership of Westmoreland County
George Guido, Tri-City Transportation Committee, New Kensington
Joyce Somers, Municipality of Murrysville

Panel resource persons:

John Surmacz, Westmoreland County
Bill Beaumariage, PENNDOT District 12-0
Stacey Rabatin, PENNDOT District 12-0

Other attendees:

Charles Horvat, Penn Township
Tom Verace, Tribune Review
Peggie Watson, ARC of Westmoreland and Irwin Council
Nick Lorenzo, Rostraver Township
Katie Morgan, Legislative Assistant to State Senator Bob Regola
George Dunbar, Penn Township
Michael Ginsburg, Penn Township
David Soboslay, Allegheny Township
Jim Seagriff, Freeport Borough
George Sam, Downtown West Newton, Inc.
State Representative John Pallone
Dr. Jeffrey D. Baird, Route 130 Citizens in Motion

SPC Staff: Ken Flack
Prue Larson

Meeting notes:

1. Welcome and Introductions

PPP Chair Terry Daughenbaugh opened the meeting, welcoming all attendees. He introduced the PPP members who were present, as well as staff from SPC, Westmoreland County Planning, and PennDOT District 12-0. Mr. Daughenbaugh described the efforts that were made to publicize the meeting, including newspaper ads placed by SPC, mailings to PPP members, and contact by the County to municipalities. He asked for a show of hands on how people had heard about the meeting and got the following response from those present: none saw the ads, 5 responded to the PPP mailing, 4 responded to the mailing to municipalities, and 2 came in response to a notice from Smart Growth Partnership.

2. Statement of Purpose of the Meeting

Mr. Daughenbaugh noted 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

Ken Flack provided an overview of the process now underway to update the Transportation Improvement Program. The TIP represents the highest priority transportation projects (both highway and transit related) 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 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 26, 2006 to provide the public with an opportunity to review the program information and submit comments to SPC and its planning partners. Public comments are then reviewed and responded to as appropriate in a Public Comment Response Document prepared by SPC.

Other draft documents also offered for comment include the Air Quality Conformity Assessment, and a requested amendment to the 2030 Long Range Plan.

Air Quality Conformity Assessment is a requirement 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 not be degraded, and hopefully will be improved.

The amendment request to the 2030 Plan is sponsored by Port Authority of Allegheny County due to a \$42 million cost increase to the North Shore Connector LRT project, for a total project cost of \$435 million. The funds to cover this cost increase have already been secured from sources outside the TIP.

All of these proposed plans will be presented at the July 31st 2006 Commission meeting for anticipated approval. If approved, the TIP Update and Air Quality Conformity documents will replace the current plans and become effective October 1, 2006.

4. Question and Answer Session

Terry Daughenbaugh asked why we are considering the North Shore Connector at this meeting in Westmoreland County. Ken Flack responded that it is a proposed amendment to the regional plan, which the full SPC Commission, including representatives from Westmoreland County, will vote on.

George Guido asked whether the Air Quality Conformity Assessment could delay projects if we do not meet Federal standards. Ken Flack responded that the entire list of projects in the draft TIP was tested, and it passed. If any project with air quality impact were added to the TIP, the air quality testing would have to be re-run.

State Representative John Pallone asked whether there was any consideration of drift from Ohio when the Air Quality Non-attainment boundaries are drawn. How can this go by county borders? Is SPC doing anything to influence the Federal designation of non-attainment areas? This impacts economic development in the region. Ken Flack offered to get more information on this subject for Rep. Pallone.

5. Public Comment

Charles Horvat, Penn Township:

Concern about three projects on Route 130:

- Intersection of SR 130 with Sandy Hill and Pleasant Valley Roads (MPMS 72703) – requests advancing funding to 2008 for right-of-way acquisition, final design and environmental work, and utilities. The project has changed from the original relocation project that was planned for Pleasant Valley Road. This work is closely related to replacement of the nearby PA Turnpike bridge and relocation of Nike Site Road, for which he requests programming of \$939 thousand in Federal funds for 2008.
- SR 130 Improvements (MPMS 32117) – requests funding for right-of-way acquisition in 2009 and 2010 for improvement of four intersections just east of the project described above.
- Harrison City/ Export Road (MPMS 32118) – concerned about no apparent funding for right-of-way acquisition and utility relocation for this project, even though there is construction funding on the TIP.

Alex Graziani asked Mr. Horvat about the timing of the Turnpike project and the level of coordination between the Township and the Turnpike Commission on the Sandy Hill and Turnpike projects. Mr. Horvat believes they can work together.

Bill Piper asked Mr. Horvat whether the Turnpike Commission is doing a study for slip ramps at Route 130, and Mr. Horvat said he understands there will be a study but he has no detailed information yet.

Nick Lorenzo, Rostraver Township:

Concern about projects that appear to have been dropped on the draft TIP:

- Finley Road (MPMS 31664)
- I-70 and SR 201 Upgrades (MPMS 60360)
- SR 201 and Vance Dei Cas Highway, where there is a huge bottleneck problem interfering with economic development – proposed intersection improvements to SR 201 and SR 1099, at \$1.1 million.

Bill Piper explained that it is not necessary to continue showing a project phase on the TIP when the funding has already been obligated, even if construction has not yet occurred. He also noted that funds

were transferred from Donora Industrial Park for study of the I-70/201 intersection. Mr. Piper suggested that Mr. Lorenzo talk to Bill Beaumariage from PennDOT after the meeting, for further explanation regarding these projects.

Dave Soboslay, Allegheny Township Manager

Concern about two bridge projects, where he requests funding for construction in 2007:

- Copeland Road Bridge, which was washed out in 2004 but is not funded through construction on the TIP.
- Finnan Road Bridge, which collapsed last week and services more than 400 homes.

State Representative John Pallone

Supports Allegheny Township's requests for replacement of Copeland Road and Finnan Road Bridges. There are important issues of public safety, access to school, and emergency access.

Testified in support of funding for the Patriot Bridge (aka Alle-Kiski Bridge) between Westmoreland and Allegheny Counties. This project was removed by the Secretary of Transportation. It is important for improved access to the Alcoa Research Center and Allegheny Ludlum as well as economic development for the greater Leechburg area. With earmarks in hand, we need to provide additional funding to advance the bridge project. Westmoreland and Allegheny Counties have offered to share the local match. But the State needs to put up its portion.

Bill Piper noted that PennDOT has been very cooperative and responsive on local bridge needs, and we will probably see amendments to the TIP to address recent collapse of the Finnan Road Bridge.

Dr. Jeffrey Baird, Route 130 Citizens in Motion

Supports advancing the SR 130/Sandy Hill intersection improvement project (MPMS 72703). In the next day or two he will be providing a packet of material to SPC in support of this project and other related projects on SR 130.

Bill Piper noted that the TIP is amended regularly, and even if the TIP is adopted on July 31 in the format of the current draft, adjustments can be made in response to new conditions.

James Seagriff, Freeport Borough

Supports the Lobaugh (Freeport) Bridge Rehab project, on SR 356 across the Allegheny River. Mr. Seagriff provided a history since 1987 of the State's intent to improve this bridge, and he emphasized the importance of proceeding with this rehab, including pedestrian improvements and possible ramp relocations on the Freeport end.

Bill Piper noted that the cost estimate of \$50 million could be low. This project is regional priority, not just a Westmoreland County concern.

With the last public comment received and no other person wishing to speak, PPP Chair Terry Daughenbaugh closed the meeting.