

Federal Highway Administration

Federal Transit Administration



Certification Review  
*Of the*  
*Pittsburgh Metropolitan Area*  
Transportation Planning Process

FHWA and FTA Joint Review of the  
Transportation Planning Process in the  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Metropolitan Area

Field Review Conducted by FHWA and FTA  
Pittsburgh, PA  
August 6-7, 2009  
November 19, 2009

Final Report Issued on January 28, 2010

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Preface ..... 2

Executive Summary ..... 3

USDOT Team Summary of Findings ..... 5

I. Introduction ..... 9

II. Prior Review Comments..... 10

III. Transit Operators: Regional Planning & Integration..... 10

IV. Project Region – Transportation Plan..... 12

V. Project Selection Process (LRTP & TIP) ..... 15

VI. Public Participation Process, Outreach, & the Americans with Disabilities Act ..... 17

VII. Title VI, Environmental Justice, Limited English Proficiency, & Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program..... 20

VIII. Transportation Management and Operations ..... 22

IX. Congestion Management Process & Integration ..... 24

X. Safety Planning & Road Safety Audits ..... 26

XI. Linking NEPA Into the Transportation Planning Process..... 26

XII. Regional Environmental Mitigation Activities..... 27

XIII. Freight in the Transportation Planning Process..... 29

XIV. Pedestrian and Bicycle Planning ..... 32

XV. Conclusion and Certification Review Findings..... 32

**APPENDIXES**

Appendix A: USDOT Review Team and Participants ..... 33

Appendix A-1: USDOT Civil Rights Review Team and Participants..... 35

Appendix B: Feb. 2, 2009 Notification Letter ..... 36

Appendix B-1: November 2, 2009 E-mail Confirmation – Civil Rights Review Coverage ..... 40

Appendix C: July 10, 2009 Desk Review Letter ..... 42

Appendix D: Certification Field View Agenda ..... 45

Appendix E: SPC FY2009 Annual Progress Report..... 47

Appendix F: Acronyms and Abbreviations ..... 66

## **PREFACE**

Pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 134(k)(5) and 49 U.S.C. 5303(k)(5), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) must jointly certify the metropolitan transportation planning in a Transportation Management Area (TMA) at least every four years. A TMA is an urbanized area, with a population of over 200,000, as defined by the United States Census. Based on the 2000 Census, there are 153 TMAs in the United States. In general, the reviews consist of three primary activities: a desk review of planning products, a site visit (field review), and preparation of a final report that summarizes the findings and recommendations. The reviews focus on compliance with Federal regulations, challenges, successes, and experiences of the cooperative relationship between the Metropolitan Planning Organization, State Department of Transportation, and transit operator(s) in the conduct of the metropolitan planning process. Joint FHWA and FTA certification review guidelines provide agency field reviewers with latitude and flexibility to tailor the review to reflect local issues and needs. As a consequence, the scope and depth of the certification review reports will vary significantly.

The certification review process is only one of several methods used to assess the quality of a local metropolitan planning process, compliance with applicable statutes and regulations, and the level and type of technical assistance needed to enhance the effectiveness of the transportation planning process. Other activities provide opportunities for this type of review, and provide both FHWA and FTA an opportunity to comment on the planning process. These activities include Unified Planning Work Program, the Long Range Transportation Plan, Metropolitan and Statewide Transportation Improvement Program Findings, air quality conformity determinations (in non-attainment and maintenance areas), as well as, a range of other formal, and less formal contact. The results of these other processes are also considered in the certification review process.

While the planning certification review report itself may not fully document those many intermediate and ongoing checkpoints, the “finding” of a certification review is based upon the cumulative findings of the entire review effort.

The certification review process is tailored to focus on topics of significance in each metropolitan planning area. Federal reviewers prepare certification reports to document the results of the review process. The reports and final actions are the joint responsibility of the appropriate FHWA and FTA field offices and content will vary to reflect the planning process reviewed, whether or not they relate explicitly to formal “findings” of the review.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) conducted a joint certification review of the transportation planning process for the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Transportation Management Area (TMA). The metropolitan planning organization (MPO) designated for the TMA is the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC). The SPC work products are conducted and produced by the SPC staff. Participants in the review are listed in Appendix A.

The 2009 certification review was conducted in five phases. The review initiated with our February 2, 2009 letter sent to the Dr. James Hassinger, Executive Director of the SPC [Appendix B]. The Civil Rights coverage of this review was confirmed by e-mail [Appendix B-1]. The five phases consisted of the following: 1) desk review of the planning products and processes, 2) FHWA and FTA issuance of desk review findings, 3) the on-site field review; 4) a verbal close out, and 5) this final certification report.

The desk review involved an analysis of all major planning documentation, provided background information for the review, and highlighted areas to be explored during the site visit. On July 10, 2009 the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) Federal Review Team (Review Team) sent notification to Dr. Hassinger identifying the findings and focus area of the desk review [Appendix C]. The findings identified the following major elements of the planning process to be discussed at the on-site field review:

- Project Region – Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)
- Project Selection Process (LRTP & Transportation Improvement Program)TIP)
- Public Participation Plan and Public Participation Panels
- Transportation Operation & Safety
- Linking the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) into the Transportation Planning Process
- Regional Environmental Mitigation Activities
- Freight in the Transportation Planning Process

The field review was conducted on August 6 and 7, 2009 at the SPC office in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The public comment/testimony open session was also held at this location in the evening on August 6<sup>th</sup>. The participants in the two days of discussions included the USDOT Review Team; SPC staff; staff from various transit operators; representatives from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) – Central Office and Districts 10-0, 11-0, and 12-0 Offices. The agenda with a complete list of topics discussed during the review is included in Appendix D. See Appendix A for the complete list of all individuals that participated in the certification review. The Civil Rights coverage of this review was conducted on November 19, 2009. The participants and topics covered are included as Appendix A-1 and D-1.

The field review complemented the preliminary desk review by allowing for an in-depth look at the required metropolitan planning products and the processes undertaken in development of those products. The review included an evaluation of the MPO's compliance with the provisions

of its self-certification resolution and Executive Order 13166 – Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency.

Included in the review included other topics such as transit operators: regional planning and integration, scenario planning efforts, congestion management process & integration, and SPC's traffic signal program. The close out session at the end of the on-site field review provided the MPO, PennDOT, and transit operators with a verbal summary of the commendations and preliminary findings of the USDOT Review Team.

This final certification report concludes the certification process by providing a written summary of the issues discussed, and documents any corresponding corrective actions, findings, and recommendations and/or commendations made by the USDOT Review Team. This report will stand as the official USDOT planning certification finding.

This certification review is the fifth review conducted of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Area TMA by FHWA and FTA. Previous reviews were documented in 2006, 2002, 1999, and 1996. Therefore, background details that were covered in other reports will not be covered again. Instead, this report will focus on changes made by the MPO, including how previous comments and recommendations have been implemented. A certification review is one of several methods to assess the quality of a local metropolitan cooperative, continuing, and comprehensive planning process.

SPC has made significant progress in addressing various corrective actions, findings, and recommendations made since the last review. This is most evident in the region's LRTP, the 2035 Plan adopted in June 2007. SPC developed the 2035 Plan through an unprecedented community engagement process called Project Region. Project Region received four National Excellence Awards, including a FHWA/FTA Planning Excellence Award, and was conducted in partnership with a wide range of other public, private and non-profit organizations.

Based on the results of the certification review, FHWA and FTA jointly find that the planning process in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan TMA complies with the spirit and intent of the metropolitan transportation planning laws and regulations. As a result, the FHWA and FTA jointly certify the planning process in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan TMA, with corrective actions, various recommendations and numerous commendations, and additional comments contained within this report. These issues will be revisited as part of our regular liaison and oversight, as well as during subsequent certification reviews of the TMA.

## USDOT REVIEW TEAM SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

### **Review Findings: Corrective Actions**

1. The USDOT Review Team mandates that PennDOT shall provide Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) guidance and support to SPC regarding the process to be utilized when selecting projects which should have DBE goals. The USDOT Review Team strongly recommends that SPC should discontinue the practice of assigning goals to each of its projects. The SPC consultant selection process should be corrected immediately.
2. The USDOT Review Team expects SPC to follow its procedure and the DBE regulations regarding Good Faith Efforts review. No projects should be awarded prior to SPC's acceptance of good faith efforts when the goal of a contract will not be satisfied by the prospective low bidder/contractor. Adherence to SPC's policy and the DBE regulations should occur immediately.

### **Review Findings: Recommendations**

1. The USDOT Review Team recommends that in addition to establishing "by-laws" the Transit Operators Committee (TOC) first define its new mission as a major contributor to the regional planning process and provide future goals for continuous improvement.
2. The USDOT Review Team recommends expansion of these joint-agency procedures to include TOC's role in the development and review of long-range transportation and land use plans, as well as programming and project selection processes.
3. The USDOT Review Team recommends updating the TOC website area identifying major planning efforts underway or proposed, along with member information, committee goals and successes.
4. The USDOT Review Team suggests that the SPC policy board and staff continue to proactively implement the actions and recommendations outlined in the 2035 Plan and refine the document as trends and external forces may dictate.
5. The USDOT Review Team encourages the MPO to further their efforts on identifying selection criteria for projects other than Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) eligible projects.
6. The USDOT Review Team notes that SPC should improve the technical evaluation component of their project selection process in order to provide decision makers with better information from which to base their decisions.
7. The USDOT Review Team requests that SPC document the process by which projects are selected that fulfills the Statewide Plan to reduce Green House Gas emissions. See PennDOT's policy office white paper "Work Plan for Potent Green House Gas Reduction Measure".  
[http://www.depweb.state.pa.us/energy/lib/energy/docs/climatechangeadvcom/transportation/workplans022509/tod\\_draft\\_022309\\_-1.doc](http://www.depweb.state.pa.us/energy/lib/energy/docs/climatechangeadvcom/transportation/workplans022509/tod_draft_022309_-1.doc)
8. The USDOT Review Team requests SPC to improve the transparency of decision making. This could be demonstrated through meeting agendas and minutes or through discussions by board members aired to the public using web-based tools.
9. The USDOT Review Team recommends that SPC continues to implement, as well as advance and expand their public involvement program through the use of innovative techniques, coordination with the Public Participation Panels, identification of and

- outreach to underserved groups/populations, and evaluation of program implementation and potential shortfalls. Furthermore, it is recommended that SPC identify ways to effectively incorporate public involvement and stakeholder coordination into the Linking Planning and NEPA process as it evolves. This will provide for a smoother transition as potential effects of activities are addressed earlier in project development.
10. The DOT Review Team reminds SPC of its responsibility to ensure diversity (ethnic, gender, disability advocacy, LEP) in the public participation process. In addition to monitoring representation and writing correspondence to county executives regarding composition of the Public Participation Panels, SPC should provide direct assistance, when and where warranted.
  11. The USDOT Review Team encourages SPC continue to monitor the ‘area of uncertainty’ which was identified as caused by its use of the U.S. Census block grouping. SPC should take appropriate measures to revise its benefits and burdens analysis to capture this data, if necessary.
  12. The USDOT Review Team emphasizes that SPC and PennDOT should collaborate and expeditiously resolve the Good Faith Efforts citations issued by SPC to the Airport Corridor Transportation Association, Oakland Transportation Management Association and Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership.
  13. As a recipient of federal transit funds, SPC should become familiar with 49 CFR Part 26 (Participation by Disadvantaged Business Enterprises in Department of Transportation Financial Assistance Programs). To assist SPC in meeting these federal DBE requirements, FTA provides training opportunities listed on its DBE website [www.fta.dot.gov/dbe](http://www.fta.dot.gov/dbe) including National Transit Institute courses designed for FTA grantees.
  14. The USDOT Review Team recommends that SPC continue to lead and/or actively participate in future updates to the regional Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) architecture and Regional Operations Plan (ROP).
  15. The USDOT Review Team recommends that SPC continue to explore opportunities for deploying ITS (e.g. surveillance, priority/pre-emption, traveler information) as part of traffic signal upgrade projects to support integrated corridor management and regional incident management strategies.
  16. The USDOT Review Team recommends that SPC consider providing operations and maintenance funding for field infrastructure and traffic management center operations to support PennDOT’s growing ITS and traffic management program.
  17. The USDOT Review Team recommends that SPC continue to champion and program ROP priority projects such as closing ITS equipment gaps, posting of travel times on dynamic message signs (DMS), support for Quick Clearance efforts, and expansion of service patrols.
  18. The USDOT Review Team recommends that pending the outcome of the I-376 ramp management study, SPC support (facilitation, education) for the recommendations.
  19. The USDOT Review Team recommends that SPC consider supporting a Statewide TIP (STIP) line item for statewide operations programs that benefit the region (e.g. 511).
  20. The USDOT Review Team recommends that the SPC staff continue to explore methods that address non-recurring congestion in the region and identify appropriate operations and ITS strategies to manage this common problem. An opportunity exists to partner with the relatively new Traffic Management Center and discuss data sharing and potential

- performance measure standards (e.g., incident clearance time, etc.) to enhance the effectiveness of the regional Congestion Management Process (CMP).
21. The USDOT Review Team requests continued documentation of the impacts of implemented operational improvements, and if possible, before and after analyses, be conducted.
  22. The USDOT Review Team recommends that SPC to continue to stay abreast of the statewide effort of Linking Planning & NEPA, while simultaneously exploring and prodding ahead within your own region to implement various initiatives that compliment Linking Planning and NEPA.
  23. The USDOT Review Team recommends that the SPC establish an environmental resource committee to assist in future updates of the region's LRTP. The committee could coordinate planning and environment linkages with emphasis on consultation and cooperation on identifying resources, strategizing potential mitigation measures, developing project selection/evaluation criteria to account for the environment, analyzing potential impacts, and educating the public and decision-makers on environmental issues.
  24. The USDOT Review Team requests that SPC continue to engage local and statewide agencies and groups, including PennDOT in order to identify possible advance mitigation opportunities.
  25. The USDOT Review Team requires that PennDOT establish, along with SPC and the remaining MPOs/RPOs, an effective process to consult with Tribes and Tribal Nations.
  26. The USDOT Review Team recommends the SPC staff, in concert with PennDOT and local governments, take the next logical steps towards expanding freight analytical processes to include system performance measures, identifying bottleneck/congested locations, and freight development areas. Instituting freight modeling analysis capabilities would tremendously benefit and support freight and intermodal planning efforts and project selection.
  27. The USDOT Review Team recommends that PennDOT become an active participant with SPC's freight planning efforts, such as the Freight Forum. Harrisburg and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) experience this spirit of cooperation and coordination with freight representatives from PennDOT, and this cooperation and coordination should be extended to SPC.
  28. The USDOT Review Team recommends that the MPO update the Southwestern Pennsylvania Freight Transportation Guidebook in cooperation with the Port of Pittsburgh Commission. The guidebook was last updated in 2002 and is a useful document for the freight industry in SPC.
  29. The USDOT Review Team encourages the SPC Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee to expand its discussion and planning to ensure compliance with the ADA as it relates to sidewalk accessibility, completion and connectivity throughout the jurisdiction. Once projects are identified, they should be progressed through administrative channels and captured in the LRTP and TIP, as appropriate.

**Review Findings: Commendations**

1. The USDOT Review Team commends SPC for formalizing the role of the TOC and the current efforts to advance an integrated planning process for addressing a multi-modal approach for regionally significant projects.



2. The USDOT Review Team lauds SPC inclusive and astounding efforts in gathering a diverse network of public, private, civic, and philanthropic organizations in a transparent and open exchange of information and ideas.
3. The USDOT Review Team applauds the innovative use of numerous technologies to captivate and engage a large, diverse constituency of participants resulting in a meaningful and productive decision-making forum.
4. The USDOT Review Team applauds SPC efforts to thoroughly document and define their CMAQ Program processes. SPC's application and evaluation process is transparent and straight forward. In addition, their local prioritization of diesel retrofits, traffic signal improvements, Travel Demand Management (TDM) efforts, commuter bicycle/pedestrian improvements dovetails with the national priorities. SPC CMAQ program is a distinguished national example.
5. The USDOT Review Team applauds SPC's use of innovative and effective visualizations techniques and methods to engage and educate the public via its website and printed materials. SPC's use of photographs, charts, and other graphics effectively communicate information to those who are "visual" learners.
6. The USDOT Review Team highly commends SPC for establishing a solid operations and management foundation in the region and encourages SPC to continue to build upon their successful leadership and practices.
7. The USDOT Review Team commends SPC for championing a Road Safety Audit (RSA) program in Southwestern Pennsylvania.
8. The USDOT Review Team recognizes SPC as one of the leaders in the Commonwealth for incorporating freight planning into their transportation planning process. A freight forum is established and quarterly meetings are held with public and private sector participants to discuss goods movement in southwestern Pennsylvania. The USDOT Review Team believes that freight planning warrants 100 % attention from dedicated staff or staff time due to the magnitude of the program.
9. The USDOT Review Team commends SPC for utilizing CMAQ and other eligible funds to enhance the freight network, port facility, diesel retrofits, and rail improvements to improve air quality in this region.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) conducted a joint certification review of the transportation planning process for the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Transportation Management Area (TMA), which included an onsite visit August 6-7, 2009. This review is a follow-up to previous certification reviews for this region that were conducted and documented by the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) in September 1996, November 1999, November 2002, and February 2006. As such, this report will not go into a lot of background details that have not changed since the last review.

The official name of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is titled the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC). It is the forum for public transportation decision-making for the ten-county region including the City of Pittsburgh and the counties of Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Lawrence, Washington, and Westmoreland. The SPC area includes over 2.66 million citizens encompassing 7,112 square miles and 549 municipal governments. The region also includes the entire Pittsburgh, Monessen, and Uniontown-Connellsville urbanized areas, as well as a small portion of the Steubenville-Weirton urbanized area.

The SPC is governed by a policy body known as the Commission and is represented by a 61 voting member board. The Commission has no weighted voting; that is each member's vote carries equal weight. Within the overall board structure of SPC, there exists an Executive Committee, the Regional Policy Advisory Committee, the Transportation Technical Committee (TTC), and the Transit Operators Committee (TOC) that provide insight and discussions leading to the transportation decision-making for the region. SPC also utilizes other committees to gather and distribute information on transportation specific topics, including but not limited to Safety and Operations, Freight Forum, Pedestrian and Bicycle, Public Participation Panels, and Airport Planning.

The purpose of this report is to assess the extent of compliance with Federal planning requirements, recognize noteworthy practices, identify problem areas, and provide assistance and guidance, as appropriate. This report will also explore how recommendations from past reviews have been addressed.

In this certification, the USDOT Federal Review Team (Review Team) reviewed the major transportation planning process components through completion of a thorough desk review phase, and then identified various focus areas for detail exploration during the on-site field view phase of the certification review. The following is a summary of each of those items discussed in the review, a synopsis of the requirements that govern each of those items, and a brief description of the USDOT Review Team findings.

## II. PRIOR REVIEW COMMENTS

The 2006 Certification Review involved an unprecedented level of involvement among the USDOT Review Team. The team examined the previous three certification reports (1996, 1999, and 2002) and discovered numerous repeated recommendations and/or findings for previous reviews that were not satisfactorily addressed.

The 2006 report resulted in the Pittsburgh TMA receiving four corrective actions and 40 recommendations to improve upon the transportation planning process being conducted in the region. The bulk of the corrective actions and recommendations were focused on activities under the control of SPC. However, several recommendations were placed with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) for implementation.

To account for the lack of substantial progress and/or documentation (supplied to the USDOT Review Team) addressing recommendations of prior certification reviews, SPC was required to provide an annual report summarizing the progress made to address corrective actions and recommendations from the 2006 review and previous reviews. This annual “progress” report was one of the four corrective actions. The annual “progress” report was imposed as a management tool to keep the certification report and the findings in the forefront of SPC yearly planning activities. This was an effective tool and assisted the USDOT Review Team to track and monitor the advancements within the region. A copy of the latest “progress report” can be found in Appendix E.

## III. TRANSIT OPERATORS: REGIONAL PLANNING & INTEGRATION

### **Requirements**

Section 5303 of Title 49 and Section 134 of Title 23 require the transportation planning process in metropolitan areas to consider all modes of travel in the development of their plans and programs. Federal regulations cited in 23 CFR 450.312 state that the MPO in cooperation with the State and operators of publicly owned transit services shall be responsible for carrying out the transportation planning process.

### **Current Status**

With the establishment of the regional TOC, as well as transit representation on the TTC, public transportation in the Pittsburgh TMA has taken a prominent role in positively shaping the region’s transportation system and many communities<sup>1</sup>.

The TOC consists of representatives from ten fixed-route and paratransit operators along with three regional Transportation Management Associations supporting the airport corridor,

---

<sup>1</sup> In 2008, the region’s fixed-route bus transit services provided nearly 62 million rides and leveraged over \$250 million in state and federal funding. FFY 2009 transit obligations increased by 55% over FFY 2008 transit obligations, due primarily to LRT North Shore Connector discretionary funds.

Oakland, and the Golden Triangle. The TOC's primary responsibilities include: drafting and tracking the transit portion of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), addressing common transit issues of regional interest, and helping to increase communication and sharing of information between SPC and the transit partners. Furthermore, two transit agencies sit on the Commission (i.e., the MPO Board) as voting members: the Port Authority of Allegheny County (PAAC) a second appointment by the SPC Transit Operators Committee (currently Mary Jo Morandini of Beaver County Transit Authority).

Recently SPC advanced several initiatives aimed at enhancing the role of SPC's TOC in the regional planning process including a series of joint activities aimed at a more comprehensive multi-modal approach to project planning. In addition, formalized TOC "by-laws" to help define the TOC's structure are currently being proposed. These efforts are a testament to the level of importance and impact transit service and capital investment has played in the region.

The TOC has developed an annual *Regional Transit Report Card* assessing the state of public transportation in the ten-county region, through evaluation of several performance criteria. This report is accessible to the public and found on SPC's website. This measurement driven approach linking funding to performance has been proposed as part of the new Federal surface transportation reauthorization act being developed (Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) expires September 30, 2009).

In 2008, updated memorandums of understanding were executed between SPC, PennDOT and the transit providers in the Southwestern Pennsylvania Metropolitan Planning Area specifying cooperative procedures for implementing transportation planning and programming. These procedures were developed to enhance the regional public transportation project planning processes. Accompanying these memorandums were updated procedures for the local redistribution of Federal transit urbanized formula funds. In accordance with these improved planning and programming agreements, the transit portion of the region's four-year TIP was updated and adopted in June 2008.

Recently, joint meetings between SPC's Transit Operators Committee and Transportation Technical Committee have been conducted to help streamline the planning and environmental process through early coordination and consultation efforts. However, the TOC/transit operators raised concerns regarding more effective utilization of their time and resources on joint projects due to the great number of projects/plans under review.

Other major transit initiatives and programs in the region that are currently being developed with the TOC and SPC staff include a regional automated fare collection (SmartCard) system, Transit Oriented Development studies, corridor studies including the Allegheny Valley Railroad and Norfolk Southern Commuter Rail Interim Study, service coordination between PAAC and outlying/connecting suburban transit agencies, CommuteInfo partnerships, and a "Google-based" trip planner tool.

**Review Findings: Recommendations**

1. **The USDOT Review Team recommends that in addition to establishing “by-laws” the TOC first define its new mission as a major contributor to the regional planning process and provide future goals for continuous improvement.**
2. **The USDOT Review Team recommends expansion of these joint-agency procedures to include TOC’s role in the development and review of long-range transportation and land use plans, as well as programming and project selection processes.**
3. **The USDOT Review Team recommends updating the TOC website area identifying major planning efforts underway or proposed, along with member information, committee goals and successes.**

**Review Findings: Commendations**

1. **The USDOT Review Team commends SPC for formalizing the role of the TOC and the current efforts to advance an integrated planning process for addressing a multi-modal approach for regionally significant projects.**

## **IV. PROJECT REGION – TRANSPORTATION PLAN**

### **a. Scenario Planning Efforts**

**Requirements**

23 U.S.C. 134, codified under 23 CFR 450.322, requires that the metropolitan transportation planning process include the development of a transportation plan addressing at least a 20-year horizon. The plan shall include both long-range and short-range strategies that lead to the development of an integrated intermodal transportation system that facilitates the efficient movement of people and goods. The long range transportation plan (LRTP) shall be reviewed and updated at least every four years in air quality nonattainment and maintenance areas to confirm its validity and its consistency with current and forecasted transportation and land use conditions and trends and to extend the forecast period. The LRTP (and any revisions) shall be approved by the MPO policy board and submitted for informational purposes to the Governor. Consideration of the results of the Congestion Management Process (CMP), as required under 23 CFR 450.320, shall be part of the LRTP, including the identification of single occupancy vehicle (SOV) projects in nonattainment areas for ozone and carbon monoxide. In addition to other requirements, as contained in 23 CFR 450.322, the LRTP shall include concept, design and scope descriptions of all existing and proposed transportation facilities in sufficient detail, regardless of the source of funding, in nonattainment and maintenance areas to permit conformity determinations under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency conformity regulations in 40 CFR Part 93.

**Current Status**

The USDOT Review Team commends the SPC and regional planning partners for making significant strides in developing the 2035 Plan for Southwestern Pennsylvania. The document is a vast improvement from its predecessor, as reflected in the following observations:

- The 2035 Plan is based on a regional vision developed through an extensive public participation process entitled “Project Region”. This effort received several national

awards that recognized it as a best practice in regional visioning. This initiative planted the seeds of regionalism through enhanced community participation in the long range transportation planning process.

- Project Region employed a scenario planning approach in getting the planning partners and stakeholders to think about the future possibilities for southwestern Pennsylvania. This technique requires commitment and significant resources from the MPO policy board and staff, but when done well, as in the case of SPC, can yield substantial dividends.
- The scenario planning approach involved the creation of six scenarios, later refined by the regional partners into four scenarios for analysis purposes. The scenarios included Trend, Dispersed/Fringe, Compact/Infill/Transit – Oriented and Corridor/Cluster, each reflecting different development location, density and transportation system improvement assumptions.
- SPC used the *Index* scenario planning software to evaluate the performance of the scenarios and track several key indicators of interest to the region, such as: amount of land developed, proximity to transit, regional travel impacts, and infrastructure costs.
- Based on stakeholder feedback and analytical results, SPC created the Regional Vision scenario, an achievement in consensus-building for the region which established a strong foundation for the 2035 Plan.
- The Financial Plan which supports the 2035 Plan is a marked improvement over the previous document and demonstrates improved cooperation and communication with the regional planning partners. The LRTP investment categories align nicely with the preferred scenario policy statements and prioritize maintenance and operations activities.
- The 2035 Plan was crafted with the aid of a robust Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology tool affording applications to better understand environmental impacts, demographic trends, economic development forecasts and traffic modeling. The GIS inventories created were valuable inputs into the scenario planning process and communication of the preferred scenario to the public and decision-makers.

In effect, the implementation of a more proactive public participation effort, coupled with an enhanced GIS analytical platform, has produced an LRTP that the region can use to shape its future. The 2035 Plan complies with the spirit of the planning regulations and exhibits many fine qualities.

#### b. Innovative Public Involvement Techniques

FHWA and FTA recognize that SPC has made extraordinary progress with its public involvement activities over the last four years. During that time, SPC has won several FHWA/FTA and American Planning Association awards for Project Region, the community engagement process used to develop the region's LRTP.

- American Planning Association 2008 National Planning Excellence Award for Public Outreach
- American Planning Association 2008 Technology Division Award for Best Use of Technology for Public Participation
- FHWA & FTA 2008 Transportation Planning Excellence Award
- U.S. Economic Development Administration 2008 Planning Performance Award

SPC has used a variety of technology to reach the public and enhance the process. SPC produced a high quality video summary of the 2035 Plan and the Project Region outreach process. This video takes the viewer on a “flyover” tour of the Southwestern Pennsylvania region that shows the breadth of the region’s geography and communities to participants from across the region.

The culmination of Project Region involved eleven public meetings held simultaneously using video and specialized software to present the draft LRTP and garner public input. This format allowed 600+ attendees to interact with each other. Over-the-web conferencing also helped to reduce costs.

Board members provided input on the meeting locations. SPC held meetings in some locations that were non-traditional, including schools and recreation centers. Because of the high response to the eleven meetings, teams were formed to vote, which was a good experience for the public to see the consensus building necessary to move the 2035 Plan forward. The electronic voting provided instant feedback. SPC noted that it is important to use clear language when working with technology, because there is the opportunity for misunderstandings and misreading of the written text.

As part of the outreach process, SPC also used some radio ads and public service spots. These have been cost-effective ways to reach the public.

From America Speaks, SPC learned that it is important to understand your demographics and make sure the invitee lists are reflective. SPC monitored attendees’ zip codes to see where gaps existed. The staff presented to minority, low-income, and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) communities.

SPC partnered with a variety of groups – Sustainable Pittsburgh, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Appalachian Regional Commission, and the Pittsburgh’s Disability Task Force to highlight a few. The MPO is also working on sustaining partnerships and relationships, so they ask members of other groups to sit on various boards. SPC recognizes that as groups get involved and see their connection to the work they are doing, they stay involved.

#### **Review Findings: Recommendations**

- 4. The USDOT Review Team suggests that the SPC policy board and staff continue to proactively implement the actions and recommendations outlined in the 2035 Plan and refine the document as trends and external forces may dictate.**

#### **Review Findings: Commendations**

- 2. The USDOT Review Team lauds SPC inclusive and astounding efforts in gathering a diverse network of public, private, civic, and philanthropic organizations in a transparent and open exchange of information and ideas.**
- 3. The USDOT Review Team applauds the innovative use of numerous technologies to captivate and engage a large, diverse constituency of participants resulting in a meaningful and productive decision-making forum.**

## V. PROJECT SELECTION PROCESS (LRTP & TIP)

### **Requirements**

23 CFR 450.324(l)(1) states that as a management tool for monitoring progress in implementing the LRTP, the TIP should identify the criteria and process for prioritizing implementation of the LRTP elements for inclusion in the TIP, and any changes in priorities from previous TIPs. There shall be reasonable opportunity for comment by all reasonable parties in accordance with 23 CFR 450.316(a)(1) and (3); in nonattainment TMAs, there must be an opportunity for at least one formal public meeting during the TIP development process [23 CFR 450.324(b)]. In addition, the TIP must be published or otherwise be made readily available for public review, including in electronically available accessible formats, to the maximum extent practicable.

In TMAs, it is the MPO that selects projects for inclusion in the TIP (except for National Highway System projects and those funded under the bridge, interstate maintenance, and Federal Lands Highway program, which are selected by the State in cooperation with the MPO) [23 CFR 450.330(c)]. The regulations state that the MPO must consult with the State and transit operators, but it is clearly the MPO that has the authority to select projects for the TIP.

### **Current Status**

Methodologies for project prioritization procedures vary across the country from highly complex analytical processes to simple qualitative checklists. While project selection and evaluation procedures are not the final decision-making point, they are a valuable tool to assist SPC's decision makers in making educated and informed decisions as to which projects are included on the LRTP and moved forward for implementation on the TIP. This approach intends to inform the public of the rationale behind selecting one transportation improvement over another.

The current TIP was developed through a process defined by the Project Evaluation Committee, and based on readily available information; crash clusters, sufficiency ratings, and pavement life. It is not clear if the TIP is drawn from the LRTP and local decision makers, who are initially engaged, remain engaged while the TIP is being finalized. The Technical Evaluation Report serves as tool for the MPO commissioners to use, along with their own discretion, in developing investment strategies and eventually the TIP. We are unsure to what degree personal discretion is used, and whether it is in conflict with an open, transparent, and objective decision-making.

At a minimum, SPC's project selection criteria for LRTP and TIP development include readily available data: International Roughness Index or IRI, percentage of trucks, bridge sufficiency rating, and crash rates. This data is coupled with pre-selected funding levels (i.e. "buckets") within categories such as maintenance, congestion relief, system expansion, etc. to arrive at a list of projects put forth on the LRTP and eventually the TIP. Thus, the decisions made by SPC for the investment categories directly correlate to the mix of projects identified on the TIP. The review team was not provided sufficient information on how SPC makes its decisions on the investment categories in order to strongly state whether this process is in need of improvement. However, enough insight was collected to question the method. The review team acknowledges that this approach is common among MPOs yet they also acknowledge it is being examined as part of the Linking Planning and NEPA initiative. That is, these initial decisions made at the MPO level are key to the delivery of the transportation program in terms of fiscal



constraint, mix of projects, and cost/benefit. Without further detailed information, the review team is uncertain as to whether SPC's project selection process is in need for improvement. This is echoed in SPC's own LRTP; however, is somewhat remedied through an emphasis for operations and safety projects using existing capacity on existing roads. Common among many MPOs, the use of line items is an essential tool for directing investment strategies.

The Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) portion of the LRTP was derived from the CMP and stemmed from a project selection process, including the use of criteria and a robust public involvement program. For example, criteria include diesel retrofits, traffic signal improvements, travel demand management (TDM), and commuter bicycle/pedestrian improvements. The open process led to the inclusion of congestion reducing (air quality improving) projects on the TIP. The SPC process for identifying and prioritizing CMAQ projects, including an application process and a CMAQ Evaluation Committee, is to be applauded.

The CMAQ portion of the TIP seems to be well developed and devoid of questionable selection criteria. However, the remainder of the TIP does not appear to be generated from project selection criteria stemming from a CMP (historically a Congestion Management System or CMS analysis). A similar Finding was posted as part of the 2006 Certification Review.

SPC has taken great strides to implement the broad category of CMAQ projects, signal synchronization, and transit oriented development, all of which could complement the national and statewide goals of reduced Green House Gas emissions (GHG). In order to drive investment strategies and meet GHG goals, it would of great benefit to have the project selection criteria lead to an increase in operations-type projects that contribute to reduced GHG emissions, such as, intelligent transportation systems (ITS), regionalized incident management, and active traffic management.

SPC employed a robust public involvement process to develop a Regional Vision Scenario and policy statements associated with implementing the Scenario. Furthermore, the Project Region Transportation Strategies Work Group utilized the policy statements generated from the Vision to develop detailed investment goals to help guide decision-making at the project level. This included employing a series of transportation investment categories such as congested corridors.

It is a compliment to SPC that other MPOs have sought their advice on developing a CMP, and assumingly, a project selection process. For example, SPC staff advises the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), Lebanon MPO and PennDOT Districts 10, 11, and 12 on how best to prioritize projects to address congestion relief.

#### **Review Findings: Recommendations**

- 5. The USDOT Review Team encourages the MPO to further their efforts on identifying selection criteria for projects other than CMAQ eligible projects.**
- 6. The USDOT Review Team notes that SPC should improve the technical evaluation component of their project selection process in order to provide decision makers with better information from which to base their decisions.**

7. **The USDOT Review Team requests that SPC document the process by which projects are selected that fulfill the Statewide Plan to reduce Green House Gas emissions. See PennDOT’s policy office white paper “Work Plan for Potent Green House Gas Reduction Measure”.**  
[http://www.depweb.state.pa.us/energy/lib/energy/docs/climatechangeadvcom/transportation/workplans022509/tod\\_draft\\_022309\\_-1.doc](http://www.depweb.state.pa.us/energy/lib/energy/docs/climatechangeadvcom/transportation/workplans022509/tod_draft_022309_-1.doc)
8. **The USDOT Review Team requests SPC to improve the transparency of decision making. This could be demonstrated through meeting agendas and minutes or through discussions by board members aired to the public using web-based tools.**

#### **Review Findings: Commendations**

4. **The USDOT Review Team applauds SPC efforts to thoroughly document and define their CMAQ Program processes. SPC’s application and evaluation process is transparent and straight forward. In addition, their local prioritization of diesel retrofits, traffic signal improvements, TDM efforts, commuter bicycle/pedestrian improvements dovetails with the national priorities. SPC CMAQ program is a distinguished national example.**

## **VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS, OUTREACH, & THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT**

### **Requirements**

Public participation processes involve the timely notification of information to the public in order to provide input early in the process. The MPO shall provide citizens or other interested parties with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed participation plan. The proposed participation plan shall be published, with reasonable notification of its availability, or otherwise made readily available for public review and comment, including (to the maximum extent practicable) in electronically accessible formats. The requirements for public involvement are set forth primarily in 23 CFR 450.316(a)(1)(2)(3) and (b) which addresses elements of the metropolitan planning process. The requirements pertaining to the LRTP (23 CFR 450.322) also include provisions addressing public outreach (450.322(f)(7), 450.322 (g), 450.322 (i), and 450.322 (j)).

Regarding the TIP, 23 CFR 450.324(b) describes the process that interested parties shall have a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed TIP as required by 450.316(a). In addition, in nonattainment TMAs, an opportunity for at least one formal public meeting during the TIP development process; the circumstances of the public meeting should be addressed through the participation plan described in 450.316(a).

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability by public entities in services, programs and activities. Public entities are required to make programs accessible to individuals with disabilities and provide equally effective communications to ensure that individuals with disabilities have access to and use of information and data that is comparable to individuals who do not have disabilities.

Executive Order 13166, *Improving Access for Persons with Limited English Proficiency*, was executed in 2000 to improve access to federally conducted and federally assisted programs and activities for persons who, as a result of nation origin, are limited in their English proficiency. It requires Federal agencies to ensure that recipients of Federal financial assistance provide meaningful access to their LEP applicants and beneficiaries.

### **Current Status**

Overall, it appears that SPC's Public participation program has improved since the 2005 Certification Review, which resulted in a number of specific Findings and associated Corrective Actions. Generally, SPC has taken steps to ensure that the diverse public throughout the region is involved in the transportation planning process through a variety of techniques and mediums and at appropriate points in the process. During discussions with staff, it was noted that SPC has placed greater emphasis on public involvement as it is essential to transportation planning.

More specifically, and in response to the Corrective Action and Recommendations resulting from the 2005 Certification Review, SPC revised their Public Participation Plan (PPP) in 2007 to include:

- A LEP Analysis, which identified various language groups and defined how to provide "meaningful access" to key transportation planning decisions.
- A reformatted discussion of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Environmental Justice Executive Order (12898), the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the LEP Executive Order. The PPP now reflects actions to be taken by SPC to "achieve and maintain compliance" with these requirements.
- Clarification of the roles and responsibilities of the Public Participation Panels, including their relationship to SPC and transportation planning in the region, membership selection criteria, and general structure.

Furthermore, the 2007 PPP no longer includes the discretionary language "where appropriate" to describe public outreach and consideration of public comment. To reduce ambiguity, the PPP now "details the strategies and procedures SPC will utilize to achieve its long-standing commitment to participation in regional transportation planning efforts."

Since the 2005 Review, SPC has also hired a Public Participation Specialist to direct the public involvement aspect of transportation planning. Beyond implementation of the PPP, staff has also worked with the Public Participation Panels and the public, in general, to determine potential issues with SPC public participation and to identify possible areas for improvement.

SPC incorporates a variety of innovative public participation techniques, including:

- Non-traditional meeting sites
- Virtual town hall meetings
- GIS technologies
- Polling
- Website applications
- On-call language translator (translating approximately 80 languages)
- On-call sign language translator (for the hearing impaired)

These innovative techniques appear to benefit the public participation process and the SPC transportation planning program as a whole. Through the use of these techniques, SPC is able to reach out to the diverse groups throughout the region, including environmental justice and LEP.

SPC's Public Participation Panels (one for each county) provide the public with an "active role" in the planning process. During the Certification Review, there were two primary themes that arose as part of the discussion:

1. Diversity - SPC assured the USDOT Review Team that the Panels are made up of logical groups from similar regions based on the counties demographic profiles. However, selections of panel members are at the discretion of the county commissioners.
2. Improvement - SPC stated that there are ongoing county-by-county requests for how the Public Participation Panels can be improved. At each meeting, the public is provided a series of questions about meeting quality and requests for suggestions. Additionally, SPC may seek to have the Public Participation Panels reconvene after a TIP update to identify possible areas of improvement.

The USDOT Review Team asked SPC if there is any concern over Panel turnover and subsequent loss of experience as new members enter. SPC stated that there is on average a 60-70% carryover of existing members, which maintains experience on the Panels. New Panel members receive a "new member packet" during an orientation session, which includes information on transportation planning and their role in the process.

During the Civil Rights review, it was noted there were several Panels where the minority representation was less than their availability to the population and several where minority representation was non-existent.

To address the requirement of making documents and information readily available for public review and comment, SPC has proactively used electronic media to seek public participation, as well as post documents on their web site for review and comment. Noteworthy examples include an instruction and summary videos of Project Region, CMP web site with "live" data, and utilization of the internet to host an interactive "satellite" public meeting.

### **Review Findings: Recommendations**

- 9. The USDOT Review Team recommends that SPC continues to implement, as well as advance and expand their public involvement program through the use of innovative techniques, coordination with the Public Participation Panels, identification of and outreach to underserved groups/populations, and evaluation of program implementation and potential shortfalls. Furthermore, it is recommended that SPC identify ways to effectively incorporate public involvement and stakeholder coordination into the Linking Planning and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process as it evolves. This will provide for a smoother transition as potential effects of activities are addressed earlier in project development.**
- 10. The DOT Review Team reminds SPC of its responsibility to ensure diversity (ethnic, gender, disability advocacy, LEP) in the public participation process. In addition to monitoring representation and writing correspondence to county executives**

regarding composition of the Public Participation Panels, SPC should provide direct assistance, when and where warranted.

**Review Findings: Commendations**

5. The USDOT Review Team applauds SPC's use of innovative and effective visualizations techniques and methods to engage and educate the public via its website and printed materials. SPC's use of photographs, charts, and other graphics effectively communicate information to those who are "visual" learners.

## VII. TITLE VI, ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY, & DISADVANTAGED BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM

### **Requirements**

It has been the long-standing policy of the USDOT to actively ensure nondiscrimination under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title VI states that "no person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." Title VI bars intentional discrimination as well as disparate-impact discrimination stemming from neutral policy or practice that has the effect of a disparate impact on protected groups. The planning regulations at 23 CFR 450.334(a) (1)-(10) outline applicable nondiscrimination requirements to which an MPO must certify.

Executive Order 12898, *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations* issued in 1994, further amplifies Title VI by providing that "each Federal agency shall make achieving Environmental Justice (EJ) part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high or adverse human health and environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations".

### **Current Status**

Stemming from the previous Certification Review Report, FHWA met with SPC staff to address the term "gaps" stated during the 2005 field view. During recent meetings, SPC clarified that a misunderstanding had occurred and SPC explained their use of the term "gaps". The term "gaps" used in 2005, was for those activities that SPC identified and planned to conduct as part of their next round of benefits and burdens analysis for the disabled and elderly populations in the region, these populations go beyond the EJ protected populations. SPC emphasized that their current benefits and burden analysis include those additional populations.

The USDOT Review Team notes that SPC continues to strive and seek improvements to their EJ processes and outreach efforts. SPC has been identified in other Pennsylvania certification reviews as having a noteworthy practice for conducting EJ benefits and burdens analyses.

However, SPC was questioned about the impact to its benefits and burdens analysis with respect to its reference to mappable improvement projects which are not directly located in EJ communities, due to the fact that the U.S. Census block tracks are often delineated by the centerline of roadways. Thus some roadway improvements span one or two EJ communities without being located entirely within an EJ community or communities. SPC explained the uncertainty about project benefits or burdens to those communities/blocks which were dissected by the U.S. Census block grouping.

PennDOT assigns DBE goals to its MPOs. MPOs, in turn, assign goals to projects to ensure that DBEs are given opportunities to participate in their projects.

During the review, it was revealed that SPC had been assigned a 9.5 percent overall goal. SPC had been assigning that goal to all of its projects. PennDOT's intent was that the total amount of all projects awarded by SPC equal the 9.5 percent, not that the goal be assigned to each project. SPC's misinterpretation of the goal assignment is in violation of the DBE regulations. The review also revealed that SPC does not conduct a Good Faith Efforts review before awarding contracts where the DBE goal has not been met. This is also a violation of the DBE regulations

The Airport Corridor Transportation Association, Oakland Transportation Management Association and Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership have been cited by SPC for not having demonstrated a Good Faith Effort in the administration of its contracts. The citations were issued after the contracts were awarded and representatives from these associations alerted SPC to their inability to satisfy the goals. Resolution of these issues is pending. The USDOT Review Team advised PennDOT and SPC to collaborate on corrective action of this issue.

PennDOT indicated that it plans to conduct DBE training for MPOs and interested parties during this Fiscal Year. The date for the training has not been determined.

#### **Review Findings: Corrective Actions**

- 1. The USDOT Review Team mandates that PennDOT shall provide Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) guidance and support to SPC regarding the process to be utilized when selecting projects which should have DBE goals. The USDOT Review Team strongly recommends that SPC should discontinue the practice of assigning goals to each of its projects. The consultant selection process should be corrected immediately.**
- 2. The USDOT Review Team expects SPC to follow its procedure and the DBE regulations regarding Good Faith Efforts review. No projects should be awarded prior to SPC's acceptance of good faith efforts when the goal of a contract will not be satisfied by the prospective low bidder/contractor. Adherence to SPC's policy and the DBE regulations should occur immediately.**

#### **Review Findings: Recommendations**

- 11. The USDOT Review Team encourages SPC continue to monitor the 'area of uncertainty' which was identified as caused by its use of the U.S. Census block grouping. SPC should take appropriate measures to revise its benefits and burdens analysis to capture this data, if necessary.**

12. **The USDOT Review Team emphasizes that SPC and PennDOT should collaborate and expeditiously resolve the Good Faith Efforts citations issued by SPC to the Airport Corridor Transportation Association, Oakland Transportation Management Association and Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership.**
13. **As a recipient of federal transit funds, SPC should become familiar with 49 CFR Part 26 (Participation by Disadvantaged Business Enterprises in Department of Transportation Financial Assistance Programs). To assist SPC in meeting these federal DBE requirements, FTA provides training opportunities listed on its DBE website [www.fta.dot.gov/dbe](http://www.fta.dot.gov/dbe) including National Transit Institute courses designed for FTA grantees.**

## VIII. TRANSPORTATION MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS

### **Requirements**

23 U.S.C. 134 (h)(1)(G), requires the metropolitan planning process include the consideration of projects and strategies that will promote efficient system management and operations. 23 U.S.C. 134(i)(2)(D), which provides the basis for 23 CFR 450.322(f)(3), specifies that the metropolitan transportation plan include *operational and management strategies to improve the performance of existing transportation facilities to relieve vehicular congestion and maximize the safety and mobility of people and goods.*

In addition, 23 CFR 450.322(f)(10)(i) further requires that the financial plan for the LRTP and per the 23 CFR 450.324(h), the financial plan for the TIP must include *for purposes of transportation system operations and maintenance, the financial plan shall contain system-level estimates of costs and revenue sources that are reasonably expected to be available to adequately operate and maintain Federal-aid highways and public transportation.*

23 CFR Part 940 states that all ITS projects funded by the Highway Trust Fund, whether they are stand-alone ITS projects or combined with non-ITS projects, must be consistent with the regional ITS architecture, and that projects must be developed using a systems engineering process. This architecture must achieve an institutional integration between transportation organizations, as well as, a degree of technical coordination, must include a description of the region, and must identify the participating agencies and stakeholders. The roles and responsibilities of these agencies along with any necessary agreements for operation should be detailed. The architecture should also identify any system functional requirements, including interface requirements and information exchanges with planned or existing systems.

Both the Southwestern Pennsylvania Regional ITS Architecture and Regional Operations Plan (ROP) encompass elements included in the Federal regional ITS architecture requirements of 23 CFR Part 940. As such, FHWA considers both these operations planning documents while evaluating compliance with the Architecture Final Rule.

### **Current Status**

The USDOT Review Team commends SPC for significantly advancing regional management and operations planning, operations coordination activities, and infrastructure deployment since

the last MPO Certification Review. Some of the notable achievements that have occurred over the past of couple of years include:

- Completion of the Regional Operations Plan. SPC championed the ROP and has offered to lead a ROP update. Regional adoption of the ROP has taken place, and is being used to prioritize operations and ITS projects.
- Re-establishing the Operations and Safety Committee and ongoing SPC support to coordinate and host the quarterly Committee meetings.
- Developing a traffic signal program, including the allocation of funding and the creation of a traffic signal manager staff position to oversee signal timing and upgrade improvements (Additional comments on this are provided below). SPC has also promoted improved traffic signal operations and maintenance through education and outreach.
- Completion of the SPC Regional Traveler Information study which is providing timely input to PennDOT as the statewide 511 traveler information service is currently being rolled out.
- SPC support to PennDOT Districts in programming projects to fill ITS deployment gaps.

SPC's leadership role in the developing the regional traffic signal program is particularly noteworthy and should serve as a model throughout the State. Traffic signal operations and coordination are a perennial challenge in the region and in the Pennsylvania in general.

SPC championed the signal program through the ROP process and subsequently secured a staff position and CMAQ funding set-aside funding to carry out traffic signal timing (Sync) and traffic signal upgrade (Sync-Up) programs. SPC worked with the three PennDOT Districts to establish the program criteria and evaluate proposals. A competitive solicitation for funding was released. SPC provided technical assistance and outreach to the municipalities to help them with the application process.

SPC is coordinating the signal program with the CMP and is documenting the effectiveness of the implemented strategies through benefit cost analysis and innovative before and after corridor traffic flow video comparisons.

The USDOT Review Team also acknowledges SPC's proactive efforts to coordinate the traffic signal technician certification training, region-wide traffic signal LED workshops, and the development of a traffic signal asset management database.

#### **Review Findings: Recommendations**

- 14. The USDOT Review Team recommends that SPC continue to lead and/or actively participate in future updates to the regional ITS architecture and ROP.**
- 15. The USDOT Review Team recommends that SPC continue to explore opportunities for deploying ITS (e.g. surveillance, priority/pre-emption, traveler information) as part of traffic signal upgrade projects to support integrated corridor management and regional incident management strategies.**
- 16. The USDOT Review Team recommends that SPC consider providing operations and maintenance funding for field infrastructure and traffic management center operations to support PennDOT's growing ITS and traffic management program.**



17. **The USDOT Review Team recommends that SPC continue to champion and program ROP priority projects such as closing ITS equipment gaps, posting of travel times on Dynamic Message Signs (DMS), support for Quick Clearance efforts, and expansion of service patrols.**
18. **The USDOT Review Team recommends that pending the outcome of the I-376 ramp management study, SPC support (facilitation, education) for the recommendations.**
19. **The USDOT Review Team recommends that SPC consider supporting a statewide TIP (STIP) line item for statewide operations programs that benefit the region (e.g. 511).**

**Review Findings: Commendations**

- a. **The USDOT Review Team highly commends SPC for establishing a solid operations and management foundation in the region and encourages SPC to continue to build upon their successful leadership and practices.**

## **IX. CONGESTION MANAGEMENT PROCESS & INTEGRATION**

**Requirements**

23 CFR 450.320 states “The transportation planning process in a TMA shall address congestion management through a process that provides for safe and effective integrated management and operation of the multimodal transportation system, based on a cooperatively developed and implemented metropolitan-wide strategy, of new and existing transportation facilities eligible for funding under title 23 U.S.C. and title 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53 through the use of travel demand reduction and operational management strategies. The CMP shall be developed, established and implemented as part of the metropolitan transportation planning process. In effect, it should not be a stand-alone process. Specifically, this section mandates that a CMP contain the following elements: 1) methods to monitor and evaluate the performance of the multimodal transportation system, 2) definition of congestion management objectives and appropriate performance measures developed in a cooperative manner, 3) establishment of a coordinated program for data collection and system performance monitoring, 4) identification and evaluation of the anticipated performance and expected benefits of appropriate strategies, 5) identification of an implementation schedule, responsibilities and funding sources for each strategy, and 6) implementation of a process for periodic assessment of the effectiveness of implemented strategies.

In addition, in TMAs designated as nonattainment areas for ozone or carbon monoxide, Federal funds may not be programmed for any project that will result in a significant increase in the carrying capacity for SOVs, unless the project is addressed through a CMP meeting the requirements of this section. The CMP shall provide an appropriate analysis of reasonable travel demand reduction and operational management strategies for the corridor in which the new capacity is proposed. All identified reasonable travel demand reduction and operational management strategies shall be incorporated into the SOV project and committed to by the State and MPO for implementation.

Congestion management is very much linked to the development of institutional frameworks and operational strategies resulting from the collaborative efforts of the planning process. Within TMAs, congestion management shall be addressed through a process that provides for safe and effective integrated management and operation of the transportation system by the use of travel demand reduction and operational management strategies (23 CFR 450.320(a)). 23 CFR 450.320 (c)(4) states that congestion management strategies should include consideration of ITS technologies from the regional ITS architecture. 23 CFR Part 450.306(f) requires the metropolitan planning process to be consistent with the development of applicable regional ITS architectures.

### **Current Status**

SPC has made significant improvements in efforts to implement an effective CMP in the Pittsburgh region. A number of recommendations from the 2006 certification review report have resulted in progress to transform the previous CMS requirement into the current SAFETEA-LU compliant CMP. Among the positive developments are:

- SPC has developed three types of performance measures and held a series of meetings in 2008 to allow planning partners to review work products and provide input into CMP development. These Work Group meetings can be a positive contribution to CMP implementation efforts and will result in establishing performance thresholds by corridor.
- SPC's Project Evaluation Subcommittee identified several ways to integrate the CMP into technical project evaluation activities, thereby strengthening the link between CMP outcomes and the LRTP and TIP.
- Linkage to operations planning in the region is evident as CMP data feeds the project evaluation process for the Regional Traffic Signal Program.
- The documentation page of the 2008 Evans City SINC-UP project which lists improvements, cost and benefits data is a good example of the periodic assessment of the effectiveness of implemented strategies and communication of the results.
- The visibility of the CMP on SPC's website is noted as testimony that congestion management is an important component of the metropolitan planning process in the region.

One aspect of continued improvement in the current CMP framework needs to occur in understanding and addressing non-recurring congestion in the region and its impacts on system performance. The FHWA Resource Center can offer assistance in working with the SPC staff to further develop this component of the CMP.

### **Review Findings: Recommendations**

- 20. The USDOT Review Team recommends that the SPC staff continue to explore methods that address non-recurring congestion in the region and identify appropriate operations and ITS strategies to manage this common problem. An opportunity exists to partner with the relatively new Traffic Management Center and discuss data sharing and potential performance measure standards (e.g., incident clearance time, etc.) to enhance the effectiveness of the regional CMP.**
- 21. The USDOT Review Team requests continued documentation of the impacts of implemented operational improvements, and if possible, before and after analyses, be conducted.**

## **X. SAFETY PLANNING & ROAD SAFETY AUDITS**

### **Requirements**

SAFETEA-LU requires MPOs to consider safety as one of the eight planning factors. 23 CFR 450.306, states that the metropolitan transportation planning process provides for consideration and implementation of projects, strategies, and services that will increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.

### **Current Status**

As discussed above under Transportation Management and Operations, SPC re-established the Operations and Safety Committee and ongoing SPC support to coordinate and host the quarterly Committee meetings. The committee provides a central regional forum to coordinate operations and safety planning throughout the region. One of the key aspects of the committee is addressing region's LRTP safety goals, by bringing regional stakeholders together to focus on what are termed the "Four E's" of highway safety: 1) Education, 2) Engineering, 3) Enforcement, and 4) Emergency Response.

SPC has stepped up to the plate as the regional champion for establishing a road safety audit (RSA) program within Southwestern Pennsylvania. A RSA is a formal safety performance examination of an existing or future road or intersection by an independent audit team. It qualitatively estimates and reports on potential road safety issues and identifies opportunities for improvements in safety. SPC has engaged the services of the FHWA peer-to-peer program and hosted a National Highway Institute RSA training course to further emphasize the importance of addressing safety.

Although there are no formal guidelines in Pennsylvania related to the number of RSA reviews, SPC has been proactive in coordinating these audits. One has been completed in District 10-0 at the intersection of SR 3021 and T-307. In addition, SPC has coordinated and scheduled to conduct six audits fiscal year 2010. SPC plans to document the benefits of the audits and any improvements implemented. SPC clearly recognizes that safety starts with planning and is commended for their role in advancing this important FHWA initiative.

### **Review Findings: Commendations**

- 7. The USDOT Review Team commends SPC for championing a RSA program in Southwestern Pennsylvania.**

## **XI. LINKING NEPA INTO THE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS**

### **Requirements**

Federal regulations 23 CFR 450.306 and 450.318 define the scope of the metropolitan transportation planning process and the relationship of corridor and other subarea planning studies to the metropolitan planning process and NEPA requirements. In addition, 23 CFR

345.316 (c)(d) and (e) address the need for participation by Federal lands management agencies and Tribal governments in the development of key products in the planning process.

The regulations governing corridor and sub-area planning studies [23 CFR 450.318] require consultation with or joint participation in the studies by the metropolitan planning process agency partners to the extent practicable. The regulations also state conditions under which documents produced in conjunction with the studies may be incorporated in the NEPA review process. Among these conditions is that reasonable opportunity for public comment be provided during the metropolitan transportation planning process and development of the studies and that FHWA and FTA review the studies. (Additional information explaining linkages between transportation planning and the project development/NEPA process is provided in Appendix A of the metropolitan planning regulations.)

### **Current Status**

SPC management and technical staff have served as MPO representatives at the PennDOT conducted Linking Planning and NEPA workshops over the last four years. As such, the MPO is aware of the hurdles that must be overcome to fully implement this new statewide planning and project development concept. SPC is waiting further instruction from PennDOT Central Office on how to link planning and NEPA. They remain supportive of PennDOT Central Office's initiative. In the meantime, SPC is embracing the concept and remains open to suggestions.

SPC staff identified several areas within the current planning process that need improvements in order to fully integrate it with the new project (linked) development process. For example, they identified the potentially cumbersome screening form for all project types. They recommend having different forms for different project types. They acknowledged that improving transit is not always considered as a solution (alternative analysis) to meet travel demand and the current process does not lead to this. They acknowledged the need for MPOs to gain credibility with the regulatory resource agencies and expand their experience with working with the myriad of Federal and State laws and regulations. SPC recommended that guidance be given to the MPOs and Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs) on how to and when to engage the resource agencies. Likewise, they recommend guidance be developed on identifying "project needs" so it can be used in the NEPA process.

### **Review Findings: Recommendations**

- 22. The USDOT Review Team recommends that SPC to continue to stay abreast of the statewide effort of Linking Planning & NEPA, while simultaneously exploring and prodding ahead within your own region to implement various initiatives that compliment Linking Planning and NEPA.**

## **XII. Regional Environmental Mitigation Activities**

### **Requirements**

The specific requirements for environmental mitigation are set forth in connection with the metropolitan transportation plan in 450.322(f)(7). However, the basis for addressing environmental mitigation is detailed in sections addressing consultation (450.316(a)(1)(2)(3) and

(b) - Interested parties, participation, and consultation; 450.322 (g)(1)(2), (i), and (j) - Development and content of the metropolitan transportation plan). Requirements related to environmental mitigation include the consultation with Federal, State and Tribes, resource regulatory agencies; opportunity to establish reasonable timeframes for performing this consultation; and activities that have the potential to restore and maintain environmental functions either from the perspective of a regional (watershed) approach or project-specific study area.

### **Current Status**

SPC initiated and developed their 2035 LRTP, Project Region, prior to the new Federal Planning Regulations being released and went into effect. However, Project Region does contain inventories of parks, wetlands, farmland, and steep slopes as areas warranting protection; but, there is no evidence that the other aspects of the environment were considered such as habitat, water quality, noise, endangered species, and cultural resources. The existing LRTP does not fully account for all environmental features, specifically the LRTP states “*the area is urbanized and disturbed from resource extraction*”; however, portions of the MPO are outside the urbanized Pittsburgh core that still contains sensitive natural and cultural resources.

The goal of environmental mitigation is to assure that decision-makers take into account potential environmental issues, constraints, and impacts when adopting the LRTP. Ideally, impacts to environmental resources should be avoided, minimized, and/or mitigated.

Future updates to SPC’s LRTP should provide more details and documentation of the known natural, cultural, and historic resources within the MPO region. To satisfy the environmental mitigation requirements, SPC consider addressing the following:

- Develop a list of resource agencies and contacts.
- Develop consultation agreements with those agencies and work with them to incorporate environmentally sensitive areas into the LRTP development process.
- Assess the region and system-wide impacts of implementing the plan.
- Work with resource agencies to define potential mitigation measures that may be needed (systems level and not project level).
- If necessary, adjust the LRTP improvements and projects to minimize impacts.

SPC is encouraged to collect and analyze the environmental data using their state of the practice GIS and work with agencies and decision-makers to develop criteria to evaluation and select transportation improvements and projects. The criteria should assess potential impacts of the LRTP mitigation strategies and measures to determine which activities have the greatest potential to restore, improve, and/or maintain the function of the environmental while simultaneously accounting for maintaining and improvement the existing and future transportation system.

### **Review Findings: Recommendations**

**23. The USDOT Review Team recommends that the SPC establish an environmental resource committee to assist in future updates of the region’s LRTP. The committee could coordinate planning and environment linkages with emphasis on consultation and cooperation on identifying resources, strategizing potential mitigation**

measures, developing project selection/evaluation criteria to account for the environment, analyzing potential impacts, and educating the public and decision-makers on environmental issues.

24. The USDOT Review Team requests that SPC continue to engage local and statewide agencies and groups, including PennDOT in order to identify possible advance mitigation opportunities.
25. The USDOT Review Team requires that PennDOT establish, along with SPC and the remaining MPOs/RPOs, an effective process to consult with Tribes and Tribal Nations.

### XIII. FREIGHT IN THE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS

#### **Requirements**

State DOTs and metropolitan areas should recognize the importance of improving the system linkages between freight and multi-modal surface roadways and port/railroad infrastructure. State and local transportation planning efforts are envisioned to ensure the safe, efficient, and effective movement of people and goods as part of the Nation's transportation system. Freight-related transportation planning and implementation efforts at the national, regional, statewide corridor, and local metropolitan planning levels represent key planning elements that enhance the operations and management of our Nation's multi-modal transportation system.

SAFETEA-LU legislation specifically calls for the need to address freight movement as part of the transportation planning process (Reference: 23 U.S.C. §134 and 23 CFR §450.306 - Metropolitan transportation planning): 23 CFR 450.306 (4) and (6) reflects that the metropolitan long range transportation planning process should *provide for the consideration and implementation of projects, strategies and services that address increasing accessibility and mobility of people and freight, and enhancing the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between transportation modes, for people and freight. This planning process for metropolitan areas should include freight planning, which can lead to a number of goals and strategies supporting and promoting multimodal transportation planning and project development in the metropolitan area.*

SAFETEA-LU also reflected the importance of involving freight shipper, providers of freight transportation services and private providers of transportation as key participants and consultants in the transportation planning process (Reference: 23 CFR§ 450.316 Interested parties, participation, and consultation.)

For example, freight modeling analysis can assist regional and local transportation decision makers in prioritizing infrastructural improvements within freight congested corridors or bottleneck areas. System preservation improvements (highway and bridge) to urban arterials or local collector improvements can in similar fashion be prioritized and selected to boost the movement of goods throughout the region.

Freight movement is linked to the entire multimodal transportation network, and both the public and private sectors have invested much time in dealing with issues regarding economic

development impacts, load bearing capacity, congestion and travel reliability, and limited funding to resolve congestion, safety and security.

### **Current Status**

The USDOT Review Team received a well prepared presentation by the SPC staff on freight transportation planning and coordination in the SPC region. Freight and multimodal coordination are major components of the MPO's transportation planning process in this region. The SPC region encompasses a comprehensive intermodal infrastructure. Five interstate routes cross and link this region, as well as, 23 railroads that include three Class 1 rail providers. The region has second largest inland port in the nation and 200 river terminals and port facilities. Twenty six public use airports are in the region including an international airport. To facilitate discussion and coordination among these multiple modal providers, SPC developed a Freight Forum.

The Freight Forum meets to discuss goods movement, industry issues and concerns, and trends. The Regional partners include railroads, Port of Pittsburgh, terminal operators, shippers and carriers, trucking interest, local officials and PennDOT. The USDOT Review Team was informed that keeping interest in the Freight Forum can be challenging. The USDOT Review Team would request that the MPO consider expanded freight planning duties in this region, which may include additional staff or accomplish within existing staff.

The MPO has developed a Freight Transportation Guidebook and Database, the fourth addition that contains company profiles for the freight business in Southwestern Pennsylvania. However, the guidebook has not been updated since 2002. This is a very useful document for new and prospective businesses in this region, and would likewise be very useful being placed on the MPOs website or each of the regions counties Economic Development sites.

SPC has also demonstrated that technology plays a tremendous role in the transportation planning process. The MPO's GIS capabilities and data coverages are extensive. The USDOT Review Team recommends that SPC build upon these technological advances and priorities, and work in cooperation with PennDOT to perform freight analysis within its travel demand model. Freight analysis is an important tool in identifying freight bottleneck congested areas, congested corridors and logistics. Several advanced analysis areas for SPC to consider are:

- Practical applications of freight modeling for users
- Interaction between freight and passenger vehicles (network capacity)
- Relationships between freight and the economy
- Cost oriented approach to logistics
- How logistics can be included in freight models
- Linking freight and land use models
- Value of delay time
- Truck parking
- Real time data collection and modeling
- Shipper route choice
- Freight movement and relationship to the green house effect
- Freight modeling and data architecture from a systems perspective
- Freight models and dealing with uncertainty such as energy, environment, etc.

- Supply chain strategies and freight models
- Value to weight ratios by commodity and flows

The USDOT Review Team was pleased to hear the successes the MPO has made in regards to funding intermodal projects in the region. The TIP as well as the long range plan emphasizes the importance of funding all transportation modes. SPC has developed a very comprehensive CMAQ selection project committee to review and approve air quality beneficial projects, and the committee has routinely selected freight and rail projects that have benefited the rail, coal, transit, and port industry.

SPC has been able to involve some freight stakeholders that are not typically active in the process. SPC was able to convince the US Army Corp of Engineers to add a new component to a locks and dam study. This new component was to understand the landside transportation implications. SPC has also involved commercial real estate interests as part of the Freight Forum.

**Review Findings: Recommendations**

- 26. The USDOT Review Team recommends the SPC staff, in concert with PennDOT and local governments, take the next logical steps towards expanding freight analytical processes to include system performance measures, identifying bottleneck/congested locations, and freight development areas. Instituting freight modeling analysis capabilities would tremendously benefit and support freight and intermodal planning efforts and project selection.**
- 27. The USDOT Review Team recommends that PennDOT become an active participant with SPC's freight planning efforts, such as the Freight Forum. Harrisburg and DVRPC experience this spirit of cooperation and coordination with freight representatives from PennDOT, and this cooperation and coordination should be extended to SPC.**
- 28. The USDOT Review Team recommends that the MPO update the Southwestern Pennsylvania Freight Transportation Guidebook in cooperation with the Port of Pittsburgh Commission. The guidebook was last updated in 2002 and is a useful document for the freight industry in SPC.**

**Review Findings: Commendations**

- 8. The USDOT Review Team recognizes SPC as one of the leaders in the Commonwealth for incorporating freight planning into their transportation planning process. A freight forum is established and quarterly meetings are held with public and private sector participants to discuss goods movement in Southwestern Pennsylvania. The USDOT Review Team believes that freight planning warrants 100 % attention from dedicated staff or staff time due to the magnitude of the program.**
- 9. The USDOT Review Team commends SPC for utilizing CMAQ and other eligible funds to enhance the freight network, port facility, diesel retrofits, and rail improvements to improve air quality in this region.**



## XIV. PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE PLANNING

SPC has a Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee. The committee meets on a quarterly basis, or as necessary, to discuss mobility issues for pedestrians and bicyclists. The committee is composed of representatives from SPC's member counties, PennDOT, the City of Pittsburgh, transit agencies, trail organizations and advocates for pedestrians, bicyclists and persons with disabilities.

The Review Team advised SPC that a number of ADA complaints have been filed in the City of Pittsburgh and it appeared this committee might be instrumental in presenting solutions to accessibility barriers for pedestrians. SPC representatives said the City of Pittsburgh has indicated it is in the process of developing a sidewalk improvement plan to address accessibility in Pittsburgh. They also mentioned SPC's involvement in developing a self-directional plan for accessibility for the City of McKees Rocks.

### **Review Findings: Recommendations**

**29. The USDOT Review Team encourages the SPC Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee to expand its discussion and planning to ensure compliance with the ADA as it relates to sidewalk accessibility, completion and connectivity throughout the jurisdiction. Once projects are identified, they should be progressed through administrative channels and captured in the LRTP and TIP, as appropriate.**

## XV. CONCLUSION AND CERTIFICATION REVIEW FINDINGS

The FHWA and FTA *jointly find that the planning process in the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Area TMA is certified.* This action is based upon the certification review conducted by the USDOT in August 2009, and both agencies ongoing interaction with this region's transportation planning process. This review confirmed that the planning process complies with the Federal metropolitan planning laws and regulations with two corrective actions, various recommendations and numerous commendations.

The USDOT Review Team highlighted specific areas of opportunity and continual process improvement within transportation planning for the Pittsburgh region. The recommendations are intended to provide greater depth of coverage to the planning issues and resulting products. The region's progress in addressing these recommendations will be monitored as part of the FHWA/FTA regular liaison throughout the course of the business cycle, and again in subsequent Federal certification reviews.

The USDOT Review Team again thanks the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission and its staff for its hospitality and candid participation during the course of this review.

**Appendix A**

US DOT Review Team and Participants  
August 6-7, 2009

**USDOT REVIEW TEAM**

Brian Betlyon	FHWA – Resource Center
Melissa Barlow	FTA – DC Metro Office
Jon Crum	FHWA – PA Division
Jim Hunt	FHWA – PA Division
Jocelyn Jones	FHWA – Resource Center
Tim Lidiak	FTA – Region III
Ryan Long	FTA – Region III
Tony Mento	FHWA – PA Division
Renee Sigel	FHWA – PA Division
Matt Smoker	FHWA – PA Division
Karyn Vandervoort	FHWA – PA Division
Dan Walston	FHWA – PA Division

**REVIEW PARTICIPANTS AND ATTENDEES**

Jim Hassinger	Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC)
Chuck DiPietro	SPC
Lew Villotti	SPC
Kirk Brethauer	SPC
Shannon O’Connell	SPC
Chuck Imbrogno	SPC
Doug Smith	SPC
Sara Walfoort	SPC
Karen Franks	SPC
Ryan Gordon	SPC
Matt Pavosky	SPC
Tom Klavan	SPC
Dom D’Andrea	SPC
Vince Massaro	SPC
Mavis Rainey	Oakland Transportation Management Association
Lucinda Beattie	Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership TMA
Lynn Manion	Airport Corridor Transportation Association TMA
Joe Dubovi	PennDOT District 10-0
Brian Allen	PennDOT District 10-0
Dave Cook	PennDOT District 10-0
Tim Jablunovsky	PennDOT District 10-0
Joe Szczur	PennDOT District 12-0
Alan Bailey	PennDOT District 12-0
Stacey Rabatin	PennDOT District 12-0
Adam Smith	PennDOT District 12-0
Kevin McCullough	PennDOT Central Office
MaryJo Morandini	Beaver County Transit Authority

Patrick Roberts  
Jeffery Leithauser

City of Pittsburgh, Department of Planning  
Washington County Planning

**PUBLIC MEETING GUESTS**

Lynn Manion	Airport Corridor Transportation Association TMA
Scott Bricker	Bike – Pittsburgh
April Clisura	Allegheny Public Participation Panel
Evelyn Slypila	Office of People with Disabilities, Vice-Chair
Robert Villella	AECOM
Daniel Caminotti	
Rebekah Murray	

**Appendix A-1**

USDOT Civil Rights Review Team and Participants  
November 19, 2009

**US DOT REVIEW TEAM**

Henry Droughter	FHWA – PA Division
Matt Smoker	FHWA – PA Division

**REVIEW PARTICIPANTS**

Jim Hassinger	Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC)
Chuck DiPietro	SPC
Shannon O’Connell	SPC
Chuck Imbrogno	SPC
Sara Walfoort	SPC
Matt Pavosky	SPC
Vince Massaro	SPC
Kevin McCullough	PennDOT Central Office
Khan Mitchell	PennDOT Central Office
Tom Baltz	PennDOT 10-0
Mark Young	PennDOT 11-0
Steve Wiedemer	PennDOT 12-0

**Appendix B**



U. S. DEPARTMENT  
OF TRANSPORTATION

*Pennsylvania Division*

*228 Walnut Street, Room 508  
Harrisburg, PA 17101-1720*

**Federal Highway  
Administration**

**February 2, 2009**

*In reply refer to:*

HPL-  
PA

Pittsburgh TMA - 2009 Planning Process  
Certification Review

Dr. James Hassinger  
Executive Director  
Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission  
425 Sixth Avenue, Suite 2500  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15219-1819

Dear Dr. Hassinger:

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) enhanced the stewardship role of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in implementing the metropolitan transportation planning process. Sections 134 of 23 USC and 1602 of 49 USC identify these planning requirements. One of the requirements call for the Federal agencies to review and certify, at least every four years, that the transportation planning process of the Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) designated as Transportation Management Areas (TMAs) is in compliance with the Federal planning requirements. FTA and FHWA view certification as one of the critical mechanisms for ensuring the satisfactory implementation of these planning requirements.

FTA and FHWA are scheduled to conduct a certification review of the Pittsburgh TMA in the summer of 2009. The dates selected to conduct this two-day review are August 6 and 7, 2009. FTA and FHWA will accomplish the certification through the following the five phases: 1) a Desk Review of Planning Products and Processes; 2) Issuance of Desk Review Findings; 3) a Field Review; 4) Verbal Close Out; and 5) a Finalized Certification Report.

**Phase 1 - Desk Review of Planning Products and Processes**

To aid the Federal agencies in conducting the Desk Review, the FTA and FHWA require that the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC) provide three copies of the following documents to the FHWA Division and one copy to the FTA Region III office, by March 16, 2009:

- Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)- Development Process
- Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) - Development Process
- Public Participation Plan
- Congestion Management Process (CMP)
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan
- Travel Forecasting Model Documentation:
  - (a) An inventory of the current state of transportation in the MPO planning area.
  - (b) Key planning assumptions used in developing the forecasts.
  - (c) Descriptions of the methods used to develop forecasts of future travel demand.
- Copies of the Annual Progress Reports as required from the previous Certification Review
- Furnish the information requested in the enclosure

The materials noted above can be supplied in electronic format via a CD or as hard copies.

The purpose of supplying these materials and planning products is to ensure that the Federal agencies have the latest version of these documents, as we conduct a thorough Desk Review to identify any items or issues requiring specific discussion and further evaluation during the on-site Field Review.

### **Phase 2 - Issuance of Desk Review Findings**

Upon completion of the Desk Review, a list of items and issues identified for further review and discussion during the on-site Field Review will be provided.

### **Phase 3 - Field Review**

As discussed with members of your staff, the two-day Field Review portion of the certification review will take place on August 6 and 7, 2009. The United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) Review Team (Review Team) will consist of staff from the FTA Region III Office and the FHWA-Pennsylvania Division. Also, we have invited a representative from the FHWA Headquarters and National Resource Center. The Field Review will be conducted at your office where the review team will meet with SPC Commissioners, SPC staff, representatives of the transit operators, PennDOT Central Office, PennDOT District Offices,

Public Participation Panel (PPP) members, the general public, and other interested parties.

The Field Review will focus on three specific areas: 1) corrective actions and recommendations identified from the FTA/FHWA Certification Review Report issued on February 8, 2006; 2) SAFETEA-LU and 23 CFR compliancy; and 3) the list of items identified from the Desk Review. Your staff should be prepared to address all of these focus areas.

The Review Team will be available to listen to statements and to answer questions from local elected officials, the public, public participation panel members, and other interested parties during an evening session on August 6, 2009 as part of the Field Review. Representatives from the SPC MPO, PennDOT, transit authorities, and other interested parties are welcomed and encouraged to attend this meeting. It will be the responsibility of your staff to advertise, publicize, and solicit participation for this public comment/testimony portion of the certification review.

**Phase 4 - Verbal Close Out**

At the end of the Field Review, a close out meeting will be held with your staff and other participants to verbally summarize the Review Team's preliminary findings.

**Phase 5 - Finalized Certification Report**

Finally, the Review Team will prepare a report documenting the Desk Review and Field Review. This report will include a summary of issues discussed, compliance checks made during the Field Review, and any corresponding corrective actions, findings, and/or recommendations. This report will stand as the official USDOT Planning Certification finding.

We look forward to working with you and your staff to finalize the agenda and logistics for this review. If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact either Timothy Lidiak at 215-656-7100 or Matt Smoker of FHWA at 717-221-3703.

Sincerely yours,

Original signed by

Michael Herron  
Director of Technical Services

Enclosure

ec: James Ritzman, Deputy Secretary of Planning  
Larry Shifflet, PennDOT Program Center  
Robin Metz, PennDOT Program Center  
Joseph P. Dubovi III, P.E., District Executive, PennDOT 10-0

*FHWA and FTA Pittsburgh TMA Certification Review*

H. Daniel Cessna, P.E., District Executive, PennDOT 11-0  
Joseph Szczur, P.E., District Executive, PennDOT 12-0  
Chuck DiPietro, SPC Staff  
Timothy Lidiak, FTA Region III  
Spencer Stevens, FHWA Headquarters  
Brian Betlyon, FHWA Resource Center

S:\FY2009\Feb\PittsburghTMA 2009 PPCertReview.mss.doc



**Appendix B-1**

**From:** Smoker, Matt (FHWA)  
**Sent:** Monday, November 02, 2009 1:53 PM  
**To:** Droughter, Henry (FHWA)  
**Subject:** RE: SPC Cert. Review - Civil Rights

Excellent!

I just spoke with Sara and Nov 19<sup>th</sup> in the afternoon should be a go!! I'll work on sending a calendar appointment to everyone. I plan to include the following folks:

Chuck DiPietro, SPC  
Sara Walfoort, SPC  
Matt Pavlosky, SPC  
Shannon O'Connell, SPC  
Kevin McCullough, PennDOT Program Center  
Khan Mitchell  
You  
Me

Did I miss any one?

Thanks,

Matt

**Matt Smoker**  
**Transportation Planning Program Manager**  
**FHWA - PA Division**  
**228 Walnut Street, 5th Floor**  
**Harrisburg, PA 17101-1720**  
**(p) 717-221-3703**  
**(e) [Matt.Smoker@fhwa.dot.gov](mailto:Matt.Smoker@fhwa.dot.gov)**

---

**From:** Droughter, Henry (FHWA)  
**Sent:** Monday, November 02, 2009 1:47 PM  
**To:** Smoker, Matt (FHWA)  
**Subject:** RE: SPC Cert. Review - Civil Rights

Matt,

This request for additional information is current. I will be using my standard questionnaire, but do not anticipate the need for additional information. Of course, that depends on their responses, but I sense that it will be easily retrievable if it is on file.

---

**From:** Smoker, Matt (FHWA)  
**Sent:** Monday, September 28, 2009 7:15 AM  
**To:** Chuck DiPietro (dipietro@spcregion.org)  
**Cc:** soconnell@spcregion.org; swalfoort@spcregion.org; Kevin McCullough (kemccullou@state.pa.us); Droughter, Henry (FHWA)  
**Subject:** FW: SPC Cert. Review - Civil Rights  
**Importance:** High

Chuck,

Good morning. The attached Word document contains the Civil Rights topics that I discussed with your staff on September 17<sup>th</sup>.

At this time, we are still in the process of coordinating several possible dates with PennDOT to conduct an on-site review in your office. As potential dates become, I'll coordinate with you.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for time and attention,

Matt

**Matt Smoker**  
**Transportation Planning Program Manager**  
**FHWA - PA Division**  
**228 Walnut Street, 5th Floor**  
**Harrisburg, PA 17101-1720**  
**(p) 717-221-3703**  
**(e) [Matt.Smoker@fhwa.dot.gov](mailto:Matt.Smoker@fhwa.dot.gov)**

---

**From:** Droughter, Henry (FHWA)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 22, 2009 3:56 PM  
**To:** Smoker, Matt (FHWA)  
**Cc:** Mitchell, Khan L  
**Subject:** SPC Cert. Review - Civil Rights

Matt,

In preparation for the Civil Rights portion of the on-site review, please request the attached information from SPC which can be presented at the review.

Thank you  
*Henry Droughter*  
Equal Opportunity Specialist

**Appendix C**



U. S. DEPARTMENT  
OF TRANSPORTATION

*Pennsylvania Division*

*228 Walnut Street, Room 508  
Harrisburg, PA 17101-1720*

**Federal Highway  
Administration**

July 10, 2009

*In reply refer to:*

HPL-PA  
Pittsburgh Transportation Management  
Area (TMA) - 2009 Certification Review  
- Findings of Desk Review

Dr. James Hassinger  
Executive Director  
Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission  
425 Sixth Avenue, Suite 2500  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15219-1819

Dear Dr. Hassinger:

Thank you for your assistance and cooperation in providing the requested Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC) planning documents in a timely and efficient manner.

The Safe, Accountable, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) continues the requirement for Certification of the transportation planning process in urbanized areas over 200,000 population once every four years. The Certification Review will be conducted jointly by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) with the objective of evaluating the transportation planning process, which does not entail conducting a pass/fail review. The intent is to highlight good practices, exchange information, and identify opportunities for improvements. The certification process relies extensively on knowledge gained from agency interaction with the planning process in your area, as well as information gathered during the desk review and on-site review.

The desk review portion of the 2009 Certification Review of the Pittsburgh TMA revealed your dedication to address and

positively respond to the previous certification review report. SPC, and the region, needs to be commended for the significant progress and commitment on the exemplary planning processes and work products under taken by SPC staff, and the other regional partners, since the previous certification review. Based on the desk review, the Federal Review Team identified the following topics to be further discussed and reviewed during the August 6-7, 2009 on-site field review:

Desk Review Findings:

- Project Region - Transportation Plan
- Project Selection Process (LRTP & TIP)
- Public Participation Plan and Public Participation Panels
- Transportation Operation & Safety
- Linking NEPA into the Transportation Planning Process
- Regional Environmental Mitigation Activities
- Freight in the Transportation Planning Process

This is not an all-inclusive list of items for discussion at the review. The items listed above merely identify focused discussion topics for which the FHWA and FTA (Federal Review Team) requests additional dialogue, clarification, understanding or documentation. The preliminary two-day agenda for the on-site review is enclosed, which further identifies other focused discussion topics.

There will be opportunities for the public officials, SPC committee members, public participation panel members, and the local citizens and interested parties throughout the entire field review to talk directly with the Federal Review Team. In addition, an open public meeting concerning their views on the transportation planning process will be conducted as part of the field review. This public session is scheduled for the evening of August 6, 2009 at 6:30 p.m. We also offer the opportunity for any MPO committee members, or other local elected officials, to meet with us separately, if they so desire.

We look forward to the continuing cooperation from you and your staff. If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate

to contact either Timothy Lidiak of FTA at 215-656-7084 or Matt Smoker of FHWA at 717-221-3703.

Sincerely yours,

Original signed by:

Mike Herron  
Director of Technical

Services

Enclosure

ec: with enclosure:

James Ritzman, Deputy Secretary for Planning  
Toby Fauver, Deputy Secretary for Local and Area Transportation  
Larry Shifflet, PennDOT Program Center  
Robin Metz, PennDOT Program Center  
LaVerne Collins, PennDOT Bureau of Public Transportation  
Joe Dubovi III, PennDOT 10-0  
Dan Cessna, PennDOT 11-0  
Joe Szczur, PennDOT 12-0  
Steve Bland, Port Authority of Allegheny County  
Mary Jo Morandini, Beaver County Transit Authority  
Timothy Lidiak, FTA Region III  
Matt Smoker, FHWA Pennsylvania Division  
Brian Betlyon, FHWA Resource Center  
Spencer Stevens, FHWA Headquarters

S:\FY2009\Jul\SPC DeskReviewFindingsLetter.mss.doc

**Appendix D**

**Final Agenda  
Pittsburgh TMA Certification Review  
August 6-7, 2009**

**Thursday, August 6**

- 8:30 AM        Introductions and Overview of the Certification Process
- 8:45 AM        Overview of the Planning Process in the Pittsburgh TMA  
*Presentation by SPC*
- 9:45 AM        Transit Operators: Regional Planning and Integration
- Future of U.S. High-Speed Rail, Sustainable Communities, & Livability
  - Transit's Future Vision & Role for & within the Region
    - o Opportunities (Smart Card, Shared Service, etc.)
    - o Barriers
  - Regional Participation and Cooperation
  - Joint Transit Authority Initiatives
  - Opportunities to Partner with the TMAs
  - JARC & New Freedom Programs
  - Joint Planning Activities between the TOC & TTC
- 12:00 PM       Lunch
- 1:00 PM        Follow Up from the Previous Certification Review:
- Project Region - Transportation Plan
    - o Scenario Planning Efforts (Land Use and Transportation Impacts)
    - o Innovative Public Involvement Techniques
  - Project Selection Process (LRTP & TIP)
- 2:30 PM        Focus Areas as Identified from the Desk Review:
- Public Participation Plan and Public Participation Panels
  - Transportation Operation & Safety
    - o Cooperative SPC/PennDOT Planning Initiatives
    - o Congestion Management Process & Integration
    - o ITS & ROP
    - o Traffic Signal Program
    - o Road Safety Audits
- 4:30 PM        Wrap-up Discussion
- 5:00 PM        Dinner Break
- 6:00 PM        Open Session to Receive Public Comments/Testimony, including discussions with Chairs and Members of SPC's ten (10) Public Participation Panels

**Final Agenda  
Pittsburgh TMA Certification Review  
August 6-7, 2009**

**Friday, August 7**

- 8:00 AM Follow-ups from Previous Day
- 9:00 AM Focus Items as Identified from the Desk Review:
- Linking NEPA into the Transportation Planning Process
  - Regional Environmental Mitigation Activities
  - Freight in the Transportation Planning Process
- 11:45 AM Lunch / Federal Review Team Meets to Develop Draft Findings
- 1:30 PM Close Out Discussion of Certification Review Findings
- 2:30 PM Adjourn

## **Appendix E**

### ***Corrective Action 1***

*“It is a corrective action that based upon the lack of substantial progress and/or documentation for addressing recommendations of prior Certification Reviews, SPC shall be required to provide an annual report summarizing the progress made to address all corrective actions and recommendations from this Certification Review and all previous reviews.”*

Federal metropolitan planning regulations include a requirement that MPO’s thoroughly document their transportation planning processes. In the February 2006, Certification Report it was recommended that such documentation include an annual report on the actions taken in response to the MPO Federal Certification Review. This report is the third such annual report.

### ***Corrective Action 2***

*“It is a corrective action that SPC shall update its Public Involvement Plan to include a Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Analysis to determine the appropriateness of the method it has chosen in having its material translated into other languages. The analysis should include some method of contacting individuals who speak the languages identified to ascertain the accuracy of the translations. The analysis should also include an evaluation of the effectiveness of utilizing its website to provide this service. Of particular concern is access to computers by the audiences SPC is trying to reach. Once the languages have been identified, SPC should initiate an outreach campaign designed to advise the target communities that the translation service exists.*

*This update should also investigate expanding the use of newspapers to include minority, or non-English, news media. An analysis should be conducted to determine the need for publishing SPC’s notices, events and activities in languages other than English.”*

In compliance with Federal Executive Order 13166 “Improving Service for Persons with Limited English Proficiency,” SPC completed a four step Limited English Proficiency Assessment of the ten-county region. The results of this LEP Assessment have been incorporated into the SPC Public Participation Plan.

SPC has identified and implemented mechanisms for the translation of vital documents and program information into the most frequently spoken languages in the region, and has identified mechanisms for the oral interpretation of telephone inquiries via a third party interpretation service.

An on-going program of specialized outreach to notify LEP individuals, community organizations serving LEP populations, and human service providers coming into contact with LEP persons and others of these language translations services is also in place.

Non-English language media in the region have been identified, and have been added to the general distribution list for SPC press releases, advertisements, etc.



**Corrective Action 3**

*“It is a corrective action that during the field review, SPC spoke of “gaps” it had discovered during the development of its Environmental Justice (EJ) Benefits and Burdens Analysis; therefore, SPC needs to identify the “gaps” in its EJ Report or a supplement to it, and the specific corrective actions it plans to initiate to address them. This work shall be tied to the region’s long-range transportation plan (LRTP) and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).”*

The 2035 Transportation and Development Plan for Southwestern Pennsylvania (2035 Plan) was adopted on June 28, 2007. A comprehensive Environmental Justice Benefits and Burdens Analysis was completed for the 2035 Plan. An Assessment of the Benefits and Burdens of the 2009-2012 Transportation Improvement Program was subsequently adopted in June of 2008.

**Corrective Action 4**

*“It is a corrective action that SPC, with assistance from PennDOT, should establish a good faith efforts review process to evaluate the efforts of prospective successful bidders on all projects with DBE goals when the goal is not met. The process should be administered in accordance with the guidelines provided in the DBE regulations 49 CFR 26.”*

In compliance with federal metropolitan planning regulations, SPC has established a review process, in consultation with PennDOT, to document and evaluate the efforts of prospective bidders to comply with established DBE Goals and Objectives, and to evaluate the bidders’ “Good Faith Efforts” in the case of non-attainment of stated DBE goals. These provisions were developed in consultation with PennDOT and the Federal Transit Administration, and are being administered in accordance with the guidance provided in the DBE regulations in 49 CFR 26.

**Recommendation 1**

*“It is recommended that the MPO establish a cooperative process for the development of Project Region financial plan and accurately convey the content of the financial plan to the public.”*

The 2035 Plan fully complies with this recommendation.

**Recommendation 2**

*“It is recommended that the MPO closely coordinate and communicate with all affected transportation agencies throughout the process of developing the region’s new LRTP financial plan.”*

The 2035 Plan fully complies with this recommendation.

**Recommendation 3**

*“It is recommended that the MPO develop clear procedures for reviewing and accepting Project specific financial plans, especially since SAFETEA-LU now requires project specific financial plans for all project greater than \$100 million, and lowered the threshold of a Major project from \$1 billion to \$500 million.”*

SPC developed procedures for reviewing and accepting project-specific financial plans through the Financial Resources Subcommittee of Project Region and implemented the procedures resulting in a federally-compliant Financial Plan element of the 2035 Plan.

**Recommendation 4**

*“Given the limitation of federal New Starts funding, it is recommended that SPC review the new capacity funding levels indicted in the transit strategy funding section of the LRTP for reasonableness in the development of ‘Project Region’.”*

The 2035 Plan fully complies with this recommendation.

**Recommendation 5**

*“It is recommended that the MPO establish and commit financial resources to a long-term investment strategy focused on the maintaining and operating the existing highway, bridge, and transit infrastructure in the region.”*

The 2035 Plan clearly reflects the region’s long-term investment commitment to the maintenance and operation of the existing highway, bridge and transit infrastructure.

The 2009-2012 Transportation Improvement Program for Southwestern Pennsylvania strongly reflects the region’s commitment to the maintenance and rehabilitation of highway, bridge and transit infrastructure. The 2009-2012 TIP was adopted in June of 2008.

**Recommendation 6**

*“It is recommended that the MPO continue with the work of developing regional and local processes to analyze, evaluate, and prioritize potential transportation projects for use in ranking LRTP and TIP candidate projects.”*

In 2006 and 2007, a Project Evaluation Subcommittee of the Transportation Technical Committee and Transit Operators Committee developed technical evaluation procedures for 16 categories of transportation investments. This process included county planning partners, PennDOT officials, and other interested parties. Project evaluations were performed for multiple

project categories in the 2035 Plan and the 2009-2012 Transportation Improvement Program for Southwestern Pennsylvania.

***Recommendation 7***

*“It is recommended that PennDOT Central Office and District 10-0, 11-0, and 12-0 Offices actively participate in the SPC Project Evaluation Subcommittee.”*

The effectiveness of the Project Evaluation Subcommittee’s 2006-2007 work is a direct result of the active and continuing involvement and cooperation of all partner agencies, including PennDOT Central Office personnel, and representatives of all three PennDOT District Offices. To facilitate such participation, SPC held outreach meetings at each PennDOT District Office. SPC staff also participated in a number of PennDOT roundtable discussions regarding issues of data sources, data reliability, evaluation criteria and other technical elements of the Project Evaluation process. PennDOT Central Office personnel were active participants in all Project Evaluation Process activities.

***Recommendation 8***

*“It is recommended that the Project Evaluation Subcommittee investigate the use of data and databases contained in PennDOT’s and SPC’s management systems (safety, congestion, pavement, bridge, etc.)”*

The Project Evaluation Process currently categorizes projects into one of 16 categories to ensure that projects are evaluated relative to comparable projects. For each project category, a series of technical and qualitative criteria have been identified for use in the project evaluation process. These criteria have been selected so as to make use of the best data available, whether it be from PennDOT sources (bridge condition, pavement roughness, etc.), SPC sources (travel time delay, air quality, etc.), regional transit operators (average age of fleet, etc. ) or an outside source (county comprehensive plans, etc.). As such, data from both PennDOT and SPC sources are primary inputs into the Project Evaluation Process. When combined, the SPC and PennDOT databases provide regional planners with a snapshot of the condition and maintenance needs of the regional transportation networks.

***Recommendation 9***

*“It is recommended that the MPO’s Public Participation Panels and the public be given a proactive role in (the project evaluation) process.”*

A framework for the technical evaluation of candidate projects has been developed by the Project Evaluation Subcommittee, with assistance from PennDOT, regional planning partners, consultants and others. Both the development of and the final technical evaluation framework

have been presented to the public at meetings of multiple SPC modal committees, Public Participation Panels and other groups for their review and comment.

***Recommendation 10***

*“It is recommended that the MPO thoroughly document the development procedures used in reallocating federal and state dollars to their member counties/city, and the individual project selection processes for the FY 2007-2010 TIP.”*

SPC’s procedures and processes for the programming of federal, state and local dollars within the region are thoroughly documented. The programming process is also documented in the 2009-2012 TIP, a document on which public review was formally solicited. Also included in the 2009-2012 TIP is documentation relative to Statewide General and Procedural Programming Guidance received from PennDOT.

***Recommendation 11***

*“It is recommended that PennDOT Central Office along with the Districts, MPOs, and RPOs produce a standard and consistent methodology for developing project cost estimates and implement the methodology statewide in the development of LRTPs and STIP/TIPs. It is important that the cost estimates are based on the future year of expenditures. FHWA cost estimating guidance can be found at [www.fhwa.dot.gov/programadmin/mega/cefinal.htm](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/programadmin/mega/cefinal.htm).”*

SPC has re-emphasized to FHWA, PennDOT District and Central Office personnel, and regional planning partners the need and importance of statewide standardized cost estimation procedures. PennDOT, as the entity responsible for the development of project cost estimates, identifies standard cost estimation procedures in Strike Off Letter 430-97-52, which they republished in 2007 and work to implement throughout the programming/project development process. SPC and the regional planning partners are also tracking phase costs for post-TIP phases to ensure consistency with Stage 2 of the 2035 Plan. SPC’s 2035 Plan incorporated federally-required year of expenditure (YOE) adjustments to the project costs as it was adopted in June 2007. Projects in the SPC 2007-2010 TIP were adjusted in December 2007 to meet year of expenditure requirements. All projects in the 2009-2012 TIP project list follow the year of expenditure cost estimate requirement.

***Recommendation 12***

*“It is recommended that PennDOT Districts adhere to the Strike Off Letter, 430-97-52, and, most importantly, develop procedures to coordinate with all MPOs and RPOs, including SPC, to reflect the revised project cost estimates in the current STIP and corresponding TIPs.”*

PennDOT Central Office has reemphasized to PennDOT District personnel the requirements of the PennDOT Strike-Off Letter, 430-97-52, which identifies the five stages when cost estimates

are required during the project delivery process. SPC works with PennDOT District level personnel to ensure that project cost estimates are provided to SPC in accordance with Strike-Off Letter 430-97-52, as we manage the delivery of projects in the 2009-2012 TIP.

### ***Recommendation 13***

*“It is recommended that the MPO and PennDOT host a regional training session and charette to learn the principals behind project scheduling and LRTP/TIP development to initiate a dialogue of how a consistent and coordinated project scheduling process benefits the planning process and establishes public accountability.”*

SPC staff and the county planning partners have met with their respective PennDOT District personnel in various work sessions to cooperatively advance consistent and coordinated project scheduling and cost estimating in the development and maintenance of both a fiscally constrained long range plan and transportation improvement program that utilize year of expenditure costs. The importance of a consistent and coordinated project scheduling process is a key element of the Statewide General and Procedural Programming Guidance which SPC staff helped to develop.

An SPC staff presentation including an extensive question and answer session, was conducted at the December 2008 Transportation Engineering and Safety Conference in State College, PA. The presentation was addressed to a large statewide audience of PennDOT engineers and consultants, and highlighted the impacts of cost estimates on project scheduling as related to the SPC development process for the TIP and the Long Range Transportation Plan.

### ***Recommendation 14***

*“It is recommended that the transit operators and SPC establish and maintain communication to disclose all federally funded transit projects obligated on an annual basis.”*

Metropolitan Planning Agreements (MPA) addressing the requirements of the federal Metropolitan Transportation Planning regulations (CFR 450.314(a)) were executed between SPC, PennDOT and the region’s operators of public transit services in May of 2008. The specific language pertaining to this recommendation contained in the Agreements is as follows:

Annual Listing of Obligated Projects - On an annual basis, no later than 90 calendar days following the end of the State program year, SPC, in cooperation with PennDOT and the Operator, shall cooperatively develop a listing of projects - including investments in pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities - for which funds (*currently under 23 U.S.C. or 49 U.S.C., Chapter 53*) were obligated in the preceding program year. The listing shall include all federally funded projects authorized or revised to increase obligations in the preceding program year, and shall at a minimum include the TIP information and identify, for each project, the amount of Federal funds requested in the TIP, the Federal funding that was obligated during the preceding year, and the Federal

funding remaining and available for subsequent years. The Operator shall be responsible for supplying the appropriate information for projects included in their individual programs. The listing shall be published or otherwise made available in accordance with the MPO's public participation criteria for the TIP.

The process was completed for FFY 2008 and is available on SPC's website at [www.spcregion.org](http://www.spcregion.org).

***Recommendation 15***

*"It is recommended that SPC post all FHWA and FTA funded project information on its web site."*

The 2035 Plan and the 2009-2012 TIP are posted on the SPC website. These identify all FHWA and FTA funded projects in the region.

***Recommendation 16***

*"It is recommended that SPC continue to advance their professional modeling practices to develop and sustain a 10-county travel demand forecasting model."*

Development and validation of SPC's new 10-county travel demand model was completed in the spring of 2007 for use in testing and evaluation of the 2035 Plan. Data collected in major travel surveys continues to be reviewed and analyzed for use in ongoing maintenance of the 10-county travel model. Staff continues to research microsimulation/visualization software packages as potential enhancements of SPC's modeling capabilities.

Freight data was acquired in the 2008-2009 Program Year to develop a goods movement component of the model and to update the truck trip generation model. Traffic volume, speed and vehicle class data collected through SPC's HPMS and CMP processes is being compiled for use in refining the trip destination model and traffic assignment procedures.

SPC's Transit Operators and Transportation Technical Committees have embarked upon a series of joint activities aimed at identifying, evaluating, programming and monitoring "projects of regional significance." Several joint meetings of the two standing Committees have been held to date in FFY2009. The goal of the current activity phase is to define and identify sub-areas of project "clusters" for forward planning and development as to regional significance.

***Recommendation 17***

*"It is recommended that the Public Involvement Policy should be re-formatted to reflect the actions that will be taken by SPC to achieve and maintain compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Environmental Justice Executive Order, the Americans with Disabilities*

*Act of 1990 and the Limited English Proficiency Executive Order in all of its activities associated with the administration of this policy. In addition, SPC's use of the term "where appropriate" in the PIP should be deleted or expanded upon throughout this document such that it does not appear that SPC has the discretion to disregard public comments received as a result of the administration of its PIP. Also, SPC should expand upon the definition of "reasonableness" in the PIP to include the criteria it uses to make the determination."*

In response to federal SAFETEA-LU mandates, a new Public Participation Plan was developed in consultation with interested parties and adopted in June of 2007. Actions suggested in this recommendation were addressed at that time.

### **Recommendation 18**

*"It is recommended that the MPO should provide orientation and guidance to members of the Public Participation Panels with respect to their roles and responsibilities. The guidance should include techniques to ensure adequate and effective outreach to minority, low-income and LEP communities within each jurisdiction. In addition, SPC needs to increase the formalization of the PPP role in the planning process by clearly identifying the responsibilities of the PPP. Possible considerations to increase the stature of the PPPs would be to establish a charter, bylaws, procedures, and handbook to effectively educate and document the roles and responsibilities of the PPPs with special emphasis on how PPP members are selected and the how the public has access to the PPP members. Also, SPC is a regional organization; therefore, a need exists to hold regional PPP meetings to collectively speak as a region."*

SPC completes an orientation and training session at the beginning of each two-year term of the Public Participation Panel members. These orientation sessions include an introduction to SPC, and the role of the Public Participation Panels. Separate training and orientation sessions were held for the co-chairpersons of the PPP panels, to educate them on their specific roles and responsibilities.

A variety of educational materials are regularly compiled into a PPP Members Guidebook. This information is distributed to each person appointed to a Public Participation Panel.

### **Recommendation 19**

*"It is recommended that the SPC staff expand their EJ analyses related to the measure of accessibility to opportunities (jobs, health care, education, etc.) for protected populations vs. non-protected populations. This work would involve base year to LRTP horizon year comparisons and appropriate assessment of potential benefits and burdens. SPC staff should conduct public outreach with the protected populations to identify any additional opportunities and to determine if those communities accept the travel timeframes developed by SPC to reach such destinations. The FHWA Division Office and the National Resource Center are available to provide technical assistance to accomplish this task."*

A comprehensive assessment of the benefits and burdens of the 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan was completed in 2007. A specialized outreach program was initiated specifically to provide outreach to human and social service agencies and advocacy groups in each of the region's ten counties. Through these outreach efforts, lines of communication have been established with agencies serving or coming into contact with special needs population groups throughout the region. These lines of communication were utilized in the public outreach efforts inherent in the development of the 2035 Plan, as well as the in the development of the 2009-2012 TIP.

In January 2008, SPC adopted the Southwestern Pennsylvania Public Transit – Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan.

The Access to Work Interagency Cooperative (ATWIC), with oversight from SPC, Port Authority of Allegheny County and the Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board, used extensive public outreach to complete this Plan. Over 1,200 agencies were asked to participate in the process. Information and comments were also taken by mail and electronic methods via the ATWIC website.

### ***Recommendation 20***

*“It is recommended that the MPO and PennDOT collectively and cooperatively develop a process to determine which candidate transportation projects have a regional transportation benefit and institute a prioritization process to fund such projects from a regional perspective.”*

Work sessions of the Project Evaluation Subcommittee, the Transportation Technical Committee and Transit Operators Committee, as well as the SPC Directors/Executive Committee were conducted to enhance the project evaluation process to be more cognizant of regional impacts. SPC refined the current project evaluation process through various SPC Committees and SPC Directors/Executive Committee to reflect their regional project guidance.

Documentation of the project evaluation process for the individual investment categories was updated to reflect particular focus on guiding the process of defining what constitutes a regional project.

SPC's Transit Operators and Transportation Technical Committees have embarked upon a series of joint activities aimed at identifying, evaluating, programming and monitoring “projects of regional significance.” Several meetings of the two standing Committees have been held to date in FFY 2009. The goal of the current activity phase is to define and identify sub-areas of project “clusters” for forward planning and development as to regional significance.



### **Recommendation 21**

*“It is recommended that the MPO analyze their existing planning processes to evaluate the effectiveness of promoting, fostering, and encouraging regionalism and regional participation.”*

Project Region, the unprecedented community engagement process created by the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC) to develop the region’s long range plan, has been honored as a Best Practice in Regional Visioning with four national excellence awards:

- Federal Highway Administration & Federal Transit Administration 2008 Transportation Planning Excellence Award
- American Planning Association 2008 National Planning Excellence Award for Public Outreach
- American Planning Association 2008 Technology Division Award for Best Use of Technology for Public Participation
- U.S. Economic Development Administration 2008 Planning Performance Award

#### **Federal Highway Administration & Federal Transit Administration 2008 Transportation Planning Excellence Award**

The 2008 Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration Transportation Planning Excellence Awards (TPEA) Program is to recognize outstanding initiatives across the country to develop, plan, and implement innovative transportation planning practices. The TPEA Program is co-sponsored by the American Planning Association.

Awards were granted to projects, processes, and groups that have made outstanding contributions to the field of transportation planning. An independent panel of judges selected the award winners, using the following criteria: innovation; community and public involvement; partnerships and collaboration; multimodalism; equity; sustainability; demonstrated results/effectiveness/replication/transferability; and category-specific considerations.

#### **American Planning Association 2008 National Planning Excellence Award for Public Outreach**

The American Planning Association announced that Project Region, developed by the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission, is the recipient of their 2008 national award for Public Outreach in the planning process. The American Planning Association is the largest organization of its kind in the world with approximately 25,000 members working to advance best practices in urban and regional planning. This award recognizes the innovative methods used to organize planning partners, volunteers, and the public, in meetings enhanced with electronic polling, geographic information system technology and internet web-based conferencing.

Project Region was led by the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission and conducted in partnership with a range of public, private and non-profit organization, to bring together the very diverse communities of Southwestern Pennsylvania. Data often available only to planners was displayed for public evaluation and voting on preferred alternatives built from the ground up.

Project Region engaged over a hundred local organizations directly to review county, state and local development plans to draft a unified plan developed through consensus of many planning partners and thousands of participants. The new regional plan focused on a vision of “transportation and development that supports the regional economy and the communities within it,” with 16 policies addressing the public interest and mutually supportive regional activities, places, and the connections between them.

The consensus policies articulate how the region will reinforce existing places, economic activities and connections with a strong emphasis on preservation, maintenance and operation of existing infrastructure.

SPC also utilized Project Region Work Groups to gather input, technical review and feedback at key milestones in the plan development process. More than 100 experts comprised the four Work Groups, each focusing on a particular element of the plan, including Financial Resources, Transportation Strategies, Economic Development Strategies, and Forecasting and Modeling. These experts provided technical expertise to plan inputs and reviewed presentation materials for accuracy and understandability prior to the larger regional meetings.

Finally, SPC assembled a Regional Partners Group comprised of hundreds of representatives of diverse organizations from public, private, and non-profit civic sectors across the region to help with the creation of alternative development scenarios and to help choose a preferred scenario as the forecasted effects of the various scenarios were presented. The Regional Partners group was designed to further involve in the planning process participants from other sectors and organizations representing stakeholder interests in the region’s future.

The Regional Partners group was made up of representatives from the public, private, civic and philanthropic sectors; municipal, county, state and federal governments and agencies; school districts, colleges and universities, community groups, economic development agencies, transportation providers; and citizens from the ten counties of Southwestern Pennsylvania.

More people than ever before in the region directly participated with planners in reviewing regional development scenarios and judging what criteria they believed were important to consider in the process. Land use, economics, environment and transportation infrastructure were topics for workshops with planners and the public in sessions throughout 10 counties. Over 3,000 participants were directly involved in planning workshops and meetings, and gave input through our websites and surveys. SPC presented these scenarios to the entire region through a live Webcast Regional Town Meeting—the first time residents throughout a region had come together via the Web to work together on planning the region’s future. In addition to being broadcast live over the internet, simultaneous Town Meetings were also held at 11 locations across the region for those without internet access or who preferred to attend a meeting in person. The result was an adopted plan allocating billions to projects that reinforced existing communities and sustainable development.

### **American Planning Association 2008 Technology Division Award for Best Use of Technology for Public Participation**

This award recognizes an organization for the best use of technology to enhance public involvement and participation in planning and decision making processes. Project Region used a series of new techniques to establish a meaningful discussion with the region on sound planning and its future. SPC created GIS-based electronic surveys that were both web-based and on touch-screen kiosks that were taken out to dozens of community meetings where people could locate their community on a digital map and answer questions generated by the program's user interface. Wireless keypad voting technology allowed hundreds of stakeholder organizations and the public to learn planning concepts in meetings, build consensus on key issues, and see polling answers summarized and displayed immediately. Over-the-web conferencing was used to reduce costs and conduct simultaneous live meetings across the entire region.

SPC also produced a high quality video summary of the plan and the Project Region outreach process. This video takes the viewer on a "flyover" tour of the Southwestern Pennsylvania region that shows the breadth of the region's geography and communities to participants from across the region. Urban and rural residents can better understand not only the differences across the region, but similarities as well, reinforcing the regional identity and commonality. The video is available on the Project Region website, which uses a digital SitePal™ guide to introduce the concepts.

### **U.S. Economic Development Administration 2008 Planning Performance Award**

The EDA issues Planning Performance Awards to those EDA investment recipients whose projects demonstrated outstanding collaboration and effectiveness in the planning phase of a project.

The 2035 Transportation and Development Plan for Southwestern Pennsylvania was developed through an unprecedented community engagement process called Project Region. SPC collaborated regionally and produced a unified regional plan, promoting economic growth and generating jobs within its ten-county area. In its collaborative outreach, SPC went well beyond standard public outreach formats, using state of the art technologies to collect feedback across the ten-county region on policy choices.

### ***Recommendation 22***

*"It is recommended that the MPO develop a tool to track the process of various EOA studies to ensure implementation of the studies recommendations."*

SPC continues to work with the communities and project sponsors in EOA and Land Use Initiative project areas to monitor and facilitate the implementation of study recommendations.

**Recommendation 23**

*“It is recommended that the MPO continue the examination of ways to pre-plan the funding levels for each project category as a planning tool and method to enhance and improve project selection criteria.”*

Projects in the 2009-2012 TIP have been categorized into one of sixteen project categories for the purposes of overall project technical evaluation and investment analysis. Pursuant to these activities, the Transportation Technical Committee identified pre-funded line items for select project categories in the 2009-2012 TIP. These line item categories include betterments, bridge preservation, enhancements, safety and various other smaller categories of projects.

In work associated with the development of the 2035 Long Range Plan, the Transportation Projects Committee identified desired investment levels for Maintenance, Transportation Operation and New Capacity project investment for Stage 2 (2011-2018) and Stage 3 (2019-2035) of the Plan. The adopted Plan demonstrated an increased commitment to maintenance as a percentage of available funds over time, as ongoing new capacity commitments were delivered and removed from the TIP. The proposed increase in the level of maintenance investment planned for 2018 was achieved in the 2009-2012 TIP, nearly ten years ahead of schedule, as a result of new revenues from the State’s Act 44 and Accelerated Bridge programs.

**Recommendation 24**

*“It is recommended that the MPO continue to foster the practice of cooperative sharing of technical tools and products, i.e., model runs for transit projects, GIS products etc.”*

SPC developed geospatial data standards in conjunction with PennDOT, regional planning partners and several Pennsylvania data users groups. As such, mapping and graphic information is shared freely and cooperatively with regional planning partners, local governments, and others in the region and across the state.

In Spring 2009, SPC produced model runs of the transit network in support of Westmoreland County’s Allegheny Valley Railroad and Norfolk Southern Commuter Rail Interim Study. SPC also produced multiple model runs of the transit network in support of Port Authority of Allegheny County’s Transit Development Plan – Connect ’09.

**Recommendation 25**

*“It is recommended that the MPO look to further improve CMS as a planning tool by establishing performance thresholds for individual corridors. Striving for these thresholds could then guide project selection at the corridor level, and the selection of specific congestion mitigation solutions at the project level.”*

SPC held a series of ten Congestion Management Process (CMP) Work Group meetings in 2008 to give transportation planners and engineers, local municipal officials, transit providers, and other transportation practitioners an opportunity to review work products and provide input into the CMP. One of the topics addressed during those meetings was the potential to establish performance thresholds in individual corridors.

***Recommendation 26***

*“It is recommended that the MPO investigate ways to further strengthen the connection between the CMS analysis and the project selection criteria.”*

SPC’s Project Evaluation Subcommittee identified a number of ways to integrate the Congestion Management Process into technical project evaluation process for the LRTP and TIP. SPC incorporated the recommended CMP-related evaluation criteria in its project selection processes for the 2035 Plan and for the current TIP update process, including the updated CMAQ project evaluation processes that were developed through the multimodal, interagency CMAQ Evaluation Committee. CMP data was also used to feed the project evaluation process for SPC’s Regional Traffic Signal Program.

***Recommendation 27***

*“It is recommended that the MPO continue to promote the Congestion Management System as a tool for identifying operating operations and ITS strategies to address non-recurring congestion.”*

SPC continues to promote the CMP as a tool for identifying operations and ITS strategies and as a mechanism for addressing non-recurring congestion. The availability and utilization of new data also enhances regional capabilities in this area. Traffic incidents, such as crashes, are common sources of non-recurring congestion. Crash analyses have recently been incorporated into the CMP evaluation process to provide insight on the frequency of this one common type of non-recurring congestion. SPC's regional Transportation Operations and Safety Committee also continues to work toward implementation of the statewide Transportation Systems Operations Plan (TSOP) and the Regional Operations Plan (ROP).

***Recommendation 28***

*“It is recommended that SPC staff continue a vigorous analysis of how outcomes from the CMS will relate to initial concepts for the proposed technical project evaluation system.”*

CMP criteria have been integrated into the project evaluation processes for the Long Range Transportation Plan and the TIP, including the new CMAQ project evaluation process and the project evaluation process for SPC’s Regional Traffic Signal Program.

**Recommendation 29**

*“It is recommended that the MPO conduct a formal analysis of the TIP modification process in order to understand the reasons for the disproportionately high number of monthly TIP modifications. The MPO must then strive to reduce that number. Close coordination with PennDOT and member counties/city is paramount to add increased validity to the SPC TIP.”*

SPC, in cooperation with PennDOT District and county planning partners, is working to increase the accuracy of total cost estimates for TIP and Long Range Plan projects. Addressing year of expenditure costs in the TIP and Long Range Plan, improved tracking of total project costs by SPC, and stricter adherence to PennDOT’s Strike-Off Letter 430-97-52 will improve fiscal constraint accountability in the region and ensure that planning decisions are based on the best available cost and financial information. Attention to cost details such as construction management and maintenance of traffic earlier in the planning process are examples of items that may not have been commonly included in historic cost estimating practices. More accurate cost estimates through the life of the project should have the effect of reducing the current number of TIP amendments to account for budgetary shortfalls as projects advance through the TIP. However, the 2009-2012 TIP is much larger than in previous years due to the inclusion of projects funded under Act 44, the Pennsylvania Accelerated Bridge Program initiative and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Multiple shifts of programming funds between the TIP and the new revenue streams have caused a significant – albeit temporary – overall increase in the number of TIP amendments over the previous year.

**Recommendation 30**

*“It is recommended that the MPO, PennDOT, and/or FHWA coordinate and ascertain that either the TIP or LRTP account for the total project cost prior to obtaining the necessary environmental approvals.”*

The SPC Long Range Plan and Transportation Improvement Program database has been enhanced to better manage and track data on total project cost. This enhancement, in conjunction with the utilization of improved project cost estimation processes and year of expenditure costs, results in more reliable total project cost estimates at such time as a project is included in the TIP. As such, total project cost data should be available at the time of environmental approval.

**Recommendation 31**

*“It is recommended that the MPO ensure that the transit operators provide sufficient evidence of financial capacity in compliance with the requirement of FTA Circular 7008.1A (Financial Capacity Policy).”*

Evidence of the regional transit operators' fiscal capacity, and compliance with FTA Circular 7008.1A, was documented in the 2007-2010 TIP and the 2009-2012 TIP for Southwestern Pennsylvania.

***Recommendation 32***

*“It is recommended that the MPO establish itself as the regional champion for ITS and develop well-defined goals and objectives.”*

SPC's role as regional ITS champion continues. To this end, SPC has created a Transportation Operations and Safety Subcommittee to better integrate regional efforts on ITS, Congestion Management, and Safety. The development of a Regional Operations Plan has also significantly increased the visibility and utility of the Congestion Management Process for identifying operations and the use of ITS strategies for both recurring and non-recurring congestion.

***Recommendation 33***

*“It is recommended that the MPO reinstate the ITS Regional subcommittee.”*

***and***

***Recommendation 34***

*“It is recommended that the MPO help identify opportunities to coordinate ITS and other capital improvement schedules (e.g. examining ITS implementation as part of roadway construction or transit vehicle procurement).”*

In 2006, the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission combined the ITS Steering Committee and the Task Force on Congestion Management to create a Transportation Operations and Safety Committee in order to integrate regional efforts on ITS, Congestion Management, and Safety. This active group of regional operations and safety partners continues to meet regularly to discuss subjects such as ITS expansion opportunities and continued implementation of the Regional Operations Plan. Examples of projects on the current TIP which include a significant ITS component include the S.R. 8 at Wildwood Road Project in northern Allegheny County and S.R. 28, Troy Hill to Millvale Project, also in Allegheny County.

***Recommendation 35***

*“It is recommended that the MPO facilitate regional standardization and resource sharing for ITS.”*

SPC's leadership in the development and implementation of both the regional and statewide ITS architectures has ensured a significant level of standardization between the two systems. The

development of standardized systems was intentional, and was designed to facilitate both intra- and inter-regional resource sharing, as well as the opportunity for full integration with the statewide ITS network. SPC will continue to provide technical assistance in evaluating ITS projects for consistency with the regional ITS architecture and to support PennDOT ITS architecture maintenance efforts.

***Recommendation 36***

*“It is recommended that the MPO incorporate ITS into the LRTP development process and to fully consider programming ITS projects in the region’s TIP.”*

The implementation of ITS strategies as tools for the enhancement of transportation efficiency and safety are core elements in the 2035 Plan. SPC has also incorporated ITS-related criteria into the project evaluation process, in the Efficiency / Operations investment category. To the extent funds permit, ITS projects have been programmed into the 2009-2012 TIP. Examples of ITS projects on the TIP include the installation of dynamic message signs along S.R. 22, I-79 and I-279 in Allegheny County, and a project to increase surveillance along a portion of I-279.

***Recommendation 37***

*“It is recommended that the MPO develop a process to identify all regionally significant, non-exempt transportation projects and include these projects in their air quality conformity determination process.”*

The need for a process whereby all regionally significant, non-exempt transportation projects are included in the air quality determination process is a statewide issue that is being addressed by the Pennsylvania Transportation Air Quality Conformity Workgroup. SPC is a member of the Workgroup, and is working with them to identify and implement appropriate procedures for the identification and coordination of such projects. In the first quarter of 2008, the Work Group assisted PennDOT in finalizing guidance (“Project Review and Classification Guidelines for Regional Air Quality Conformity,” PennDOT, March 2008) for classifying all projects as exempt or non-exempt for purposes of regional air quality conformity. PennDOT modified the MPMS to include data fields for the project status codes used for project classification. This process was used in the development of the 2009-2012 TIP.

On a regional level, SPC has reinforced with project sponsors the need for accurate and complete project descriptions. Efforts to monitor and track changes in project scopes to ensure timely identification of regionally significant, non-exempt projects is an on-going effort requiring the continued coordination and cooperation of the members of the Pennsylvania Air Quality Workgroup, SPC staff, project sponsors, PennDOT, and others.

In addition, SPC’s Transit Operators and Transportation Technical Committees have embarked upon a series of joint activities aimed at identifying, evaluating, programming and monitoring “projects of regional significance.” Several joint meetings of the two standing Committees have



been held to date in 2009. The goal of the current activity phase is to define and identify sub-areas of project “clusters” for forward planning and development as to regional significance.

***Recommendation 38***

*“It is recommended that the MPO and PennDOT mutually collaborate in the identification and documentation of the air quality status for projects that are advancing through the project development process.”*

SPC staff continues to work with PennDOT, regional planning partners, local communities and others in the identification of regionally significant, non-exempt, transportation projects during the development of the TIP and LRTP. As needed, and as appropriate, SPC staff notifies its planning partners that all regionally significant projects, regardless of funding source, must be included in the regional air quality conformity assessment and shown on the TIP and Plan. Staff encourages its planning partners to identify and provide project details for non-federally funded projects that they plan to advance in the TIP period. In the conformity document, SPC staff reports the air quality status of individual projects as they advance through the project development process.

***Recommendation 39***

*“It is recommended that the MPO, PennDOT, FHWA, and FTA effectively develop communication mechanisms to share information on a formal and informal basis.”*

SPC uses its website, newsletters, meetings and meeting materials to formally communicate information with PennDOT, FHWA, FTA and other regional planning partners. Informal communications between SPC, FHWA, FTA, PennDOT and the regional planning partners occur frequently, and information is shared freely during such interactions.

***Recommendation 40***

*“It is recommended that the MPO determine and analyze the benefits of bolstering the role of the TMAs in the SPC planning process.”*

SPC has entered into an executed partnership agreement with each of the three Transportation Management Associations in the region in support of SPC’s CommuteInfo Program, following a planning process conducted by a nationally-recognized consultant. Those agreements define a clear role for the TMAs in that Program. In addition, the TMA’s serve as regional partners in the transportation planning process, actively participating in the Transportation Technical Committee, Transit Operators Committee, CMAQ Project Selection Committee, Pedestrian-Bicycle Committee and Freight Forum. TMA participation in the regional Congestion Management Process is currently being expanded, to provide the TMAs with greater involvement in the assessment of implementation activities and the performance of congestion

mitigation strategies in their program areas. SPC staff also provides technical assistance to the TMAs through participation in special studies sponsored by the TMAs, when requested. SPC staff is represented on the board of the Airport Corridor Transportation Association (ACTA) and the Oakland Transportation Management Association (OTMA). SPC also regularly participates in the technical forums and planning initiatives sponsored by the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership.

**Appendix F**

**ABBREVIATIONS**

ADA.....	Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
CFR.....	Code of Federal Regulations
CMAQ.....	Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality
CMP .....	Congestion Management Process
CMS .....	Congestion Management System
DBE.....	Disadvantaged Business Enterprise
DMS .....	Dynamic Message Sign
DVRPC .....	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
EJ.....	Environmental Justice
FHWA.....	Federal Highway Administration
FTA.....	Federal Transit Administration
GIS .....	Geographical Information Systems
GHG.....	Green House Gas
IRI .....	International Roughness Index
ITS.....	Intelligent Transportation System (formerly IVHS)
LEP .....	Limited English Proficiency
LRTP.....	Long Range Transportation Plan
MPO.....	Metropolitan Planning Organization
NEPA .....	National Environmental Policy Act
PAAC .....	Port Authority of Allegheny County
PennDOT .....	Pennsylvania State Department of Transportation
PPP.....	Public Participation Plan
ROP .....	Regional Operations Plan
RPO.....	Rural Planning Organization
RSA .....	Road Safety Audit
SAFETEA-LU .....	Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users
SOV .....	Single Occupancy Vehicle
STIP .....	Statewide Transportation Improvement Program

SPC .....Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission  
TDM.....Transportation Demand Management  
TIP .....Transportation Improvement Program  
TMA.....Transportation Management Area  
TOC .....Transit Operators Committee  
TTC .....Transportation Technical Committee  
US .....United States  
U.S.C.....United States Code  
USDOT .....United States Department of Transportation