



## SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA COMMISSION

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### MINUTES TRANSIT OPERATORS COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: September 16, 2020  
Location: **Meeting was held by online video/teleconference**

Attendance:

Members: Sheila Gombita, WASH (Chairperson)  
David Wohlwill, PAAC  
Rick Blaker, Greene County  
Anthony Hickton, CommuteInfo  
Mary Jo Morandini, BCTA  
Nancy Basile, MMVTA  
Alan Blahovec, WCTA  
Mavis Rainey, OTMA  
Tiffany Johnston, TACT  
David Richards, NCATA  
Lynn Manion, ACTA  
Lori Groover Smith, FACT  
John Paul, BTA

Guests/Staff: Kevin McCullough, PennDOT  
Ronda Craig, CommuteInfo  
Lisa Kay Schweyer, CMU/Mobility21  
Sam Plocinski, PennDOT

SPC Staff: Tom Klevan  
David Totten  
Kathy Stefani  
Andy Waple  
Vincent Valdes

This meeting of the TOC was called to order at 10:00 A.M.

## 1. Welcome and Introductions

## 2. Public Comment –

- a. *There was no public comment.*

## 3. Approval of Meeting Minutes for previous Transit Operators Committee meetings

- *The Committee approved the minutes for the July 16, 2020 Joint TOC-TTC meeting on a motion by David Richards and a second by Alan Blahovec.*

## 4. FTA/PennDOT Updates

- Sam Plocinski from the PennDOT Bureau of Public Transportation, reported to the Committee on the Bureau's asset update through the Capital Planning Tool.
- Kevin McCullough from PennDOT updated the Committee on the progress in Congress to reauthorize federal transportation funding. McCullough also reported that the draft TIPs were under review by the appropriate state and federal agencies.
- SPC Staff reported to the TOC that FTA had completed the process to adopt updated regulations on Joint Development. An upcoming webinar from FTA & Rail~volution is planned to go over the changes.

## 5. Meeting Participant Updates

- WASH—Sheila Gombita from Freedom Transit reported that new route changes were set to go into effect. WASH had been serving local parks, but ridership was not good, so that service has shifted to offer service to middle and high schools. Although the schools are in hybrid-mode due to the pandemic and ridership is not expected to be high, this represents an important coordination step. The route will also serve the Presbyterian Senior Care facility. This service change reflects a focus on essential service.
- OTMA—Mavis Rainey reported that with fewer students at Oakland universities taking in-person classes, OTMA has shifted its Transportation Demand Management information table to a virtual format.
- CommuteInfo—Anthony Hickton reported that ridership is down 90% at the CommuteInfo vanpool program. Most vehicles are being idled. The plan is to disband the existing vanpools until demand returns. Mavis Rainey noted that there are still opportunities for commuting, via vanpool, for essential workers in Oakland and offered to work with CommuteInfo.
- BTA—John Paul reported that the final specs and bid documents would be released for the final phase of the Butler Transit Authority multimodal facility. The plan is to award a construction contract in February with completion late summer or early fall of 2021.
- WCTA—Alan Blahovec reported that WCTA has done a number of surveys since the sudden loss of service since the start of the pandemic. The most recent survey shows about 70 riders per-day commuting to Pittsburgh. WCTA plans to begin increasing local service in October, adding earlier morning trips and later evening trips, looking to restore some of the service that was cut at the beginning of the pandemic. WCTA still has a shortage of operators, and there is worry that service will suffer if employees get sick.

*There were no other meeting participant updates.*

## 6. Amendments and Administrative Actions to the FFY2019-2022 TIP

*There were no TIP adjustments requested.*

## 7. CMU Smart Mobility Challenge

- Lisa Kay Schweyer from the Traffic21 program at Carnegie Mellon University, updated the TOC on the Smart Mobility Challenge. For this year's challenge, CMU is looking for municipalities and public transit operators who have mobility problems in a suburban or rural

community that they would like assistance in studying, for example, issues of transportation equity or the COVID-19 crisis. Any ideas that successfully garner grant funding for research projects will be announced in February, 2021. The project will be complete by June 30, 2022. Lynn Manion described a study through this program with ACTA that analyzed a new hub stop for last-mile service in the airport corridor.

#### **8. WCTA North Huntington Park-and-Ride Project**

- Alan Blahovec gave a report on the North Huntington Park-and-Ride lot, which is used by WCTA for commuter service on US30. The lot is located on WCTA-owned property behind a convenience store on Carpenter Lane. The project to refurbish the lot was designed by HDR with construction managed by Gannett Fleming.

#### **9. SPC Regional Park-and-Ride Inventory**

- SPC staff updated the TOC on the online database of park-and-ride facilities in the region. SPC works in cooperation with transit agencies to collect data for the facilities inventory. The 111 active facilities are presented online. SPC staff visits each facility on a two-year rotation to add data such as facilities, utilization and to use vehicle registration ZIP Codes as origin data for planning. SPC will coordinate with facility owners and transit operators about the date and time of the visits. The PnR data is also used in SPC's Congestion Management Program. The database includes an individual data portal page for each facility and is available at [www.commuteinfo.org](http://www.commuteinfo.org)

#### **10. Regional Transit and CommuteInfo Marketing**

- SPC staff reported on strategic planning work for the CommuteInfo program and led a discussion about the future direction of the program. CommuteInfo is working with the marketing firm, Market Space, and with Port Authority's marketing professionals, to create a message that will promote transit in general across the region. The goal is to create materials that could be used by all of the agencies in the region. TOC members interested in participating in an advisory panel on this effort are asked to contact David Totten at SPC.

#### **11. ITS4US Application**

- SPC staff reported on a recent effort to apply for a federal planning grant called "ITS4US". Staff and consultants developed the application around using advanced technology to plan for multimodal. The grant parameters are based on the "Complete Trip" concept, covering an individual's trip from planning to arrival. (Update: although the program was anticipated to be awarded by the end of September, it was not awarded.) SPC will update the TOC if the project is announced.

#### **12. Staff Updates**

- SPC staff updated the Committee on the *SmartMoves Connections* regional transit planning project, including plans for the upcoming Transit Operations Workshop and progress and initial results from the public survey task.
- SPC staff reported on the completed process of developing the newly-adopted FFY2021-24 Transportation Improvement Program. TIP development began in the spring of 2019 with public outreach through a web survey and initial public comments. In the fall of 2019, SPC held 12 TIP development work group meetings to screen and prioritize candidate projects. CMAQ and Transportation Alternatives projects were selected through a competitive application and Public Participation Panel meetings were held in each of the 10 counties. The preliminary Draft TIP was submitted to PennDOT for review in the winter. In the spring of 2020, projects were selected for funding through SPC's Smart Transportation Program and the TIP was further reviewed for Air Quality Conformity and Environmental Justice. Following the 30-day public comment period in May, 2020, the TIP was approved by the Southwestern Pennsylvania

Commission. The final stage will be completed shortly with final reviews by federal agencies FTA and EPA. SPC also conducts a process evaluation review survey with stakeholder agencies. The new TIP officially takes effect starting October 1, 2020.

- SPC staff reported on the Active Transportation Forum held online September 1<sup>st</sup>. The presentations included a staff updates on 2020 bicycle counting activities and the recently-launched Bicycle Level-of-Comfort Mapping initiative. The ATF also included a presentation by Cleveland active transportation expert Angie Schmitt about her new book, *Right of Way: Race, Class, and the Silent Epidemic of Pedestrian Deaths in America*. A recording of the presentation, including the Q&A with Angie Schmitt is available on request from SPC Staff. The next ATF is scheduled for December 1<sup>st</sup>.

### 13. Other Business

- The TOC considered adding a meeting in October to accommodate amendments to the newly-adopted TIP. *(Update: no amendments were needed, so this meeting was cancelled.)*
- *The next meeting of the TOC is scheduled for 10 a.m. **Wednesday, December 9, 2020**. This meeting will be held with online/phone participation **ONLY**. See details at [www.spcregion.org](http://www.spcregion.org)*  
***Action:** The meeting was adjourned on a motion by David Richards and a second by Alan Blahovec.*