

Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission
Minutes of the Meeting
April 26, 2021 – 4:30 p.m.
Cisco Webex Meeting

The one hundred and forty-sixth meeting of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission was called to order by Chairman Rich Fitzgerald

Members: Darin Alviano, Tony Amadio, Jennifer Beer, Mike Belding, Kevin Boozel, Morgan Boyd, Tom Ceraso, Gina Cerilli, Ali Doyle, Rich Fitzgerald, Kim Geyer, Shelia Gombita, Mark Gordon, Joe Grata, Kelly Gray, Lynn Heckman, Sherene Hess, Mark Hilliard, Diana Irey Vaughan, Charles Jones, Fred Junko, Katharine Kelleman, Sean Kertes, Clifford Levine, Larry Maggi, Jack Manning, Kevin McCullough, Leslie Osche, Johnna Pro, Mavis Rainey, Bob Regola, Aurora Sharrard, Nick Sherman, Larry Shifflet, Byron Stauffer, Vince Vicites, and Blair Zimmerman.

Others: Ann Ogoreuc and Anthony Schneider, Allegheny County Department of Economic Development.

Staff: Vincent Valdes, Erin Kepple Adams, Jared Bedekovich, Mary Brangan, Kirk Brethauer, Rhonda Craig, Colleen Friend, Ryan Gordon, Chuck Imbrogno, Tom Klevan, Jennifer Lasser, Vince Massaro, Shannon O'Connell, Dee Pamplin, Kay Tomko, and Andy Waple.

1. Chairman Fitzgerald called to order the April 26, 2021 meeting of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission.
 - Quorum – There being a quorum present the meeting proceeded.
 - Any conflict of interest declaration on action items – None

2. Action on Minutes of the January 25, 2021 Minutes

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the January 25, 2021 meeting by Commissioner Maggi which was seconded by Commissioner Boozel. The affirmative vote was unanimous.

3. Public Comment – None

4. Financial Report – Vince Massaro

Vince Massaro reported on the financials for the eight-month period from July 1, 2020 through February 28, 2021. We have the approved budget with revenues and expenditures of \$15,051,636. We have actual encumbered expenditures and revenues to date of \$10,470,469 for 69.6% of the budget expended to date. All project work continues as budgeted for the fiscal year. Most programs and budgets for the projects have an end date of June 30, 2022. So, we may see some of those expenditures carry

over into the new fiscal year 2021-2022. Program grant funding has been timely giving us good cash flow. At the end of June, we will present the agency budget for adoption by the Commission.

There were no questions for Mr. Massaro on the financial report.

5. Action on Resolution 6-21 to Adopt an Updated Public Participation Plan (PPP) – Vincent Valdes/Shannon O’Connell

Chairman Fitzgerald asked Vincent and Shannon for an update on the PPP before the motion to adopt.

Mr. Valdes said that SPC being an MPO is responsible for TIP planning and the Long-Range Plan along with guiding a 23-billion-dollar budget that we have through 2045, it's very important. But none of that is done without public outreach and public participation, not only are you our constituents and our partners, and our customers in this, but the general public as well. I would like for Shannon O’Connell, our Director of Communications and Public Engagement, to take a few minutes to walk through our Updated Public Participation Plan.

Good afternoon, I’m Shannon O’Connell, SPC Communications Director. As Vincent said, when it comes to planning, we don’t do this all by ourselves. Of course, engaging with the public is part of our federal mandate. But sometimes things are requirements because they are actually good ideas.

You see, our transportation engineers and planners could design and build the most technically sound and perfectly functioning transportation system based on their knowledge alone. I mean, these are really smart people. But if it doesn’t get people where they want to go and when and how they want to get there, it’s essentially useless.

That’s where public participation comes in. And contrary to what some may think, SPC does not develop plans and TIPs in some office somewhere and then say “OK public, what do you think?” We start with public participation in the beginning.

We consider public input at every step of the planning process, and how we do that is documented in our Public Participation Plan.

Introduction






- Tools and techniques used to inform and engage the public throughout our transportation planning and programming processes
- Provides opportunities and access for all individuals to provide input on key transportation planning, policy and investment decisions
- Learn how to participate, see our methods for sharing information, and identify opportunities to provide input



Our Plan is based around these five major goals:

- To inform and educate the public so they can better understand how to give input.
- To reach out to and build connections with the different populations and communities throughout the region so they are aware of our services.
- To engage the public by bringing planning to them and using a variety of engagement techniques such as public meetings, social media, surveys etc. for continued participation.
- We then use what we hear from the public in shaping plans and programs for investments. I'm going to talk about how we do that in a moment
- Then we evaluate how we're doing. Are we reaching people? Do they know about SPC? We also look at new tools and techniques. Obviously, virtual meetings and online participation opportunities have taken center stage lately. We've learned that a combination of different tools—high tech and low tech—work best for reaching the most people

Public Participation Plan Update Agenda Item: 5

	Goal 1: Inform and Educate the Public		Goal 4: Use Public Input to Shape Policies, Plans, and Programs
	Goal 2: Reach Out and Build Connections		Goal 5: Evaluate Public Participation Strategies
	Goal 3: Engage the Public and Encourage Continued Participation		

Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission 7

The Public Participation Plan documents the framework we use for public engagement. So we have all of these ways people can participate in the planning process, but what does SPC actually do with public input, when we're developing the TIP?

You're all familiar with the public participation reports we do that document all public comments and our responses, but that's only a tiny part of how input is used.


At the beginning of each TIP update, our planners meet with the county planning departments and PennDOT district staff and they go through every single public comment received to see where we can apply that human data to project development, which in turn informs investment decisions.

And if a comment doesn't apply to the current program, we don't throw it out, we carry it through to the next iteration.

Public Participation Plan Update Agenda Item: 5

How to Participate

- Wide range of communication tools and engagement techniques to obtain meaningful participation
- Assists members of the public, stakeholders, and other interested parties to find the necessary information to participate in the planning process
- Opportunities and access for all individuals to provide input on key transportation planning, policy and investment decisions



<p>Public Participation Panel Meetings</p> <p>Each county in our region has a Public Participation Panel with a minimum of 12 members appointed by County Commissioners. Panel meetings are held for those to provide input on transportation planning process and major decisions.</p>	<p>Planning Decision Points</p> <p>Before setting or major transportation planning decisions, SPC provides at least 30 days for public review and comment. Information on how to access documents is provided on our website and via our Document Review Network.</p>	<p>SPC Meetings and Public Meetings</p> <p>Our regular SPC meetings and Public Meetings allow public opportunities for public comment. You can find out other valuable opportunities of upcoming public meetings on our website: www.spc.pa.gov/SPC.</p>	<p>Commission Meetings</p> <p>We hold Commission Meetings quarterly that are open to the public for comment. If a person is unable to comment during a scheduled meeting, they can submit their comments in written, verbal, or electronic form.</p>
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission 8

Another very important part of the Participation Plan is that it provides the framework and guidance to ensure that we are reaching out beyond people who are typically interested in transportation planning. As elected officials, you're all very familiar with the sort of "core constituents" that you get on any given issue. Which is great, but essentially every person uses our transportation system in one way or another.

From going to the hospital to be born, taking the bus to school, commuting to your job, going to a Steelers game, visiting relatives, traveling in retirement, all the way to your funeral procession, you are using the transportation system throughout your lifetime.

To get that all-important human data, we reach out to what are referred to as traditionally underserved populations, such as low-income communities, minorities, people who don't speak English well, the disabled community, our tribal consultation partners, elderly and non-car households and other groups to help us reach as many users of the transportation system as we can.

This document also tells the public what to do if they think they have been discriminated against and how to take action.

SPC, as the MPO, is one of the most publicly accountable organizations you will ever encounter, and we take that mission very seriously.

Access and Information for All

- Increase the number of participants and meaningful input throughout the planning process, including traditionally underserved populations
- Priority is to build new relationships with community organizations to increase the diversity and number of participants who engage in activities

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE
LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY
AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)/ SECTION 504/508 COMPLIANCE
TRIBAL CONSULTATION
ELDERLY, NON-CAR HOUSEHOLDS, AND OTHER TRADITIONALLY UNDERSERVED TITLE VI DISCRIMINATION COMPLAINTS

Thank you very much, and I would be happy to answer any questions.

There being no questions, Chairman Fitzgerald asked for a motion to adopt Resolution 6-21 the Updated Public Participation Plan. Larry Shifflet made a motion to adopt and Leslie Osche second. The affirmative vote was unanimous.

6. Action on Resolution 7-21 to Proclaim May, 2021 “National Bike Month in Southwestern Pennsylvania – Vincent Valdes.

Chairman Fitzgerald asked Mr. Valdes to speak on proclaiming May as National Bike Month. And then, if Mr. Bricker is on the line, I'm going to ask him to make the motion on Resolution 7-21, if he has signed on.

Mr. Valdes said this is a result of the League of American Bicyclists, which has declared May as National Bike Month. For the past 64 years it's a topic that I'm very well familiar with. They will be celebrating it this year again in May, usually on the 3rd Friday of May. May of 2021 will be proclaimed as National Bike Month. The resolution is for a localized version of that.

A RESOLUTION OF THE SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA COMMISSION to proclaim May 2021 as “National Bike Month” in Southwestern Pennsylvania.

WHEREAS, the bicycle is an economical, healthy and environmentally sound form of active transportation for many work, school, utilitarian, recreational and social trips in southwestern Pennsylvania;

WHEREAS, there is an increasing interest in healthy, sustainable and economic transportation options;

WHEREAS, improving conditions for bicycling has been shown to improve safety and encourage healthy lifestyles, to have a positive impact on the region's economy and tourism industry, to support local businesses and to reduce air pollution and traffic congestion;

WHEREAS, the League of American Bicyclists has declared May as National Bike Month for the past 64 years, celebrates the third Friday in May as Bike to Work Day and the week of Bike to Work Day as Bike Week, and has done so again in 2021, and

WHEREAS, the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission and other groups across this region are celebrating ways to “bike there” during the month of May 2021 and moving towards a holistic approach to integrating bicycling into many aspects of our daily lives.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission encourages the citizens of this region to participate in National Bike Month activities and offers support for this annual celebration of bicycling by declaring May 2021 as “National Bike Month” in southwestern Pennsylvania.

Chairman Fitzgerald not hearing from Mr. Bricker, asked for a motion on Resolution 7-21 to Proclaim May as National Bike Month. Commissioner Sharrard made a motion which was seconded by Commissioner Irey Vaughan. The affirmative vote was unanimous.

7. Action on Certificate of Appreciation to Honor the Services of Jessica Walls-Lavelle – Vincent Valdes

Yes, this is to present her with a certificate of appreciation for serving with distinction as the governor's representative to the SPC since January of 2019. Do I have a motion to approve the certificate of appreciation? Commissioner Boozel made a motion which was seconded by Commissioner Amadio. The affirmative vote was unanimous.

Chairman Fitzgerald said he would make arrangements for her to receive the certificate.

8. Committee Report on Activities of the Regional Policy Advisory Committee – Leslie Osche

Commissioner Osche stated with a report by Ken Zapinski, on the Pittsburgh works together regarding the clearing air report and had a little bit of a discussion about how that whole concept fits into our strategic plan for the entire region, and the vision for the region and so we'll be conscious of that, as we move forward with our plans, particularly for the infrastructure bill.

Second, we talked about the regional public transportation safety targets, and again are finding ways that that incorporates into, our long-term vision.

And then finally, really of great interest today was a discussion with smart moves connections, regional transit plan, which again, we think has some implications for certainly, as an exciting implication for the upcoming infrastructure bill. In follow up, that tied to our last month's discussion, regarding engaging municipalities and particularly around water and sewer projects. So, certainly, the call the other day with Alcosan on the line discussing the fact that they have 83 municipalities that have significant project needs relating to water and sewer has implications not only for the rescue plan but, also for the infrastructure bill. So, again we look forward to having more in-depth discussions with this committee moving forward. I think we have now in front of us enough to work with to begin some engaged discussion. So, thank you.

Chairman Fitzgerald thanked Commissioner Osche. I appreciate you taking on this committee and really engaging. That's really where a lot of the work and a lot of discussion will happen before it's brought before the entire Commission. And, along those lines Vinceny is going to give a report, but let me just very quickly say that this infrastructure bill, that's being discussed in Washington, whether it's the two trillion-dollar plan that the administration has put forth or the 500 billion-dollar plan that the Senate Republicans have put forth; it's going to be the most robust infrastructure plan that we've seen in a generation and maybe beyond that, depending on how it comes out and I just think we all need to be putting forth to Vincent some of the plans we'd like to see put in place and be approved, whether it's two trillion or whatever. There's probably going to be about six trillion dollars of requests from around the country. It's going to be a very competitive situation for us to be able to go to our congressional incentive delegation to

make the case on our behalf to become successful. We have these projects funded. We're going to need to know, and put a plan together and a vision together on where we go and it's going to be broader. I think we all understand that just roads and bridges and transit that we've traditionally seen, it's also going to involve rail. It's going to involve our rivers, it's going to involve activity, both physical and virtual meetings like this. Sustainability and climate change are going to be a big part. Equity, communities that have been previously left behind and haven't seen some economic growth in a number of years, and obviously jobs and economic development will have a big part of it. And I think also, you may see things like local and state match maybe graded in that we don't know where that's going to be, but we'll be working through Vincent and the team to be able to again, put our vision together for our 10 counties.

And what the southwestern Pennsylvania region really needs to move forward, and all the different areas that we're growing in, whether it be energy or manufacturing robotics, autonomous vehicles, life sciences. Again, this is going to be very, very broad compared to what we've seen in the past. So, I think we want to be as prepared as we can and put our best foot forward. So be thinking about that and be thinking, bold, big, big, plans about getting funding that we all need for our region.

9. Message from the Executive Director – Vincent Valdes
Next Meeting Date - June 28, 2021





Mr. Valdes said thank you very much Mr. Chairman and yes, let me reiterate that we will be that conduit. Earlier, Commissioner Osche mentioned that this is about storytelling as well as anything else we really need to have that very articulate story as to what we are as a region. As Chairman Fitzgerald mentioned public transportation, bridges and roads airports, clean water and sewers. Yes, that's at the core of it. But why are we doing it? What are the societal impacts of it? And I'm sure that that's what the federal government will be looking for. Whether its DOT or USDOT or other agencies that'll be putting out discretionary funding, we want to be competitive for that and SPC will play a very active role in helping be your conduit to develop that strategic thinking around what we are. We have to come up with that very articulate, very kind of unified approach so that we're all rising as a region.

Next, I would like to brief everybody on a few things. First, let me just remind everyone that the next Commission meeting will be on June 28th. So please put that date on your calendars. Hopefully, by then, with the Chairman's approval, we'll be ready to meet in person, but we'll still have the virtual option for those who choose.

A few months ago, I mentioned that SPC was beginning an effort to strengthen our core processes, the tools, and the things that make us a more effective organization in supporting Southwestern Pennsylvania; and the objectives and goals of Southwestern Pennsylvania.

SPC Evolution Strategy - Overarching Themes





Information distilled from first round of stakeholder interviews into overarching themes.

Engagement Pillar	Topics
 Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central communications strategy Internal performance metrics
 People / Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inter-departmental collaboration Performance management Highly technically skilled
 Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defined / documented processes
 Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IT function, modeling, and data

That effort we called the evolution strategy is really meant to be a deep dive into what the organization looks like and everything from our relationships with all of you to our internal procedures and our standard operating procedures. If they're appropriate for the work we're doing and, so there is no corner that we're not going to shed some light into to look at improving the operations of SPC. We're in the midst of the first round of activities, which includes evaluating our communication strategies, and you saw Shannon's presentation; our organization structure. Again, as I mentioned earlier, the technologies that we're using to support our mission and communicating with our constituencies.

SPC Evolution Strategy - Key Takeaways

Initial highlights after reviewing preliminary SPC documentation.

Topic	Documentation Highlights	Source(s)
 Performance Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employees rating criteria Staff performance expectations Clear goals and objectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2019 Performance Reviews SPC Focus Group Recommendations (2017)
 Metrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Areas of impact stated for each department, but specific metrics are not (e.g., jobs created, export dollars) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Briefing Sheets
 Inter-departmental Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SPC's collaboration recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allocate projects across departments New hire orientation Field views 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SPC Focus Group Recommendations (2017)
 Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SPC recommended to implement Office 365 cloud-based solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SPC Focus Group Recommendations (2017)

We've interviewed staff at this point and we're starting to reach out to some of our external stakeholders. Some of you may be getting notices that we will be asking the consultant to reach out to you and interview you and talk about how we might improve our game here; so, you can expect that I'll be particularly interested to hear what our customers say. More so, even then necessarily internally, I've been here long enough. I've been here now, 10 months. So, I've been here long enough to hear from staff from SPC staff, where we need to improve. I want to hear that from external sources as well, but I think what we're talking about is progressively moving forward and really thinking about our primary resource, people; which is all of you, and all of the staff at SPC. In terms of our goals and objectives; how we interact with all of within SPC, in terms of all of the different departments is critical. But, how we interact with you is also paramount. So, again, this is part of what this evolution will take account of.

Our next steps in this process are going to be to benchmark us against other similar MPOs to see how they are doing business. Similarly, sized MPOs that have about the same profile as we do. We'll be looking at that and benchmarking our performance and our practices against what they do, we're going to start engaging SPC Directors, folks that you know, very well in a change management activity so that we can evolve strategically, and not just make changes for the sake of making change if you know what I mean.

Message from the Executive Director Agenda Item: 9

SPC Evolution Strategy - Next Step; MPO Benchmarking

Confirming the appropriate benchmarking criteria will allow us to make an 'apples-to-apples' comparison between SPC and other, similar organizations.

Topic	Criteria Examples
 Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headcount • Department / division scope • External stakeholder landscape
 Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population served • Demographics • Regional / local economy (e.g., industries served) • Geography (e.g., 'hub and spoke' model)
 Mission / Mandate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic priorities • Types of projects undertaken • Policy areas of expertise • Local Development District (LDD) status • Economic Development District (EDD) status
 Innovation & Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High profile projects • Winning discretionary federal funding • Mature processes and tools
 Financials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size of budget • Funding sources (including share of revenue)

Benchmarking criteria against organizations to compare SPC.

Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission 19

And finally, as I mentioned earlier, we're going to reach out to many of you through our consultants to get honest opinions on how we can improve as an organization as an agency. So, again, look out for that. And let me know if you'd like to be one of the interviewed individuals.

If there's one thing I want to kind of communicate is it's one of my personal mantras. There's never anything in nature that is more inevitable than change. And so, organizations that are willing to embrace that change, are the ones that succeed, and certainly SPC, as wonderful an organization as it is has areas where we can improve all

organizations do and we will be doing that on behalf of Southwestern Pennsylvania. Happy to take any questions and looking forward to the results of this effort.

10. Other SPC Business – Rich Fitzgerald

Chairman Fitzgerald thanked Vincent and asked if there were questions on the organizational part. And then any other discussion regarding some of the things that I've brought up, or some of the things Commissioner Osche discussed. Also, as was mentioned, the June 28th meeting two months from now, they'll be putting a notice out regarding the meeting. We miss all you guys and would love to see you, if you're vaccinated come on in.

Commissioner Zimmerman commented that being on the RTA he feels responsible as a Greene County Commissioner to speak up. But, you know, as we look ahead, especially on the transportation stuff, please, don't forget us in Greene County. I feel like we've always been the illegitimate child. I mean, we're not Allegheny, we're not Westmoreland, and we're not Butler. You've got a lot of good things going on, and you guys are very important to the region; but, there's things that can make us benefit everybody in this region. If transportation is addressed, maybe transportation, even in southern parts of Washington County that would benefit Greene County too; maybe getting into the City but I'm just kind of pleading that during this process, you always keep us in your thoughts and prayers, as we move forward.

Chairman Fitzgerald responded no question Commissioner and you're 100% right? And that's why I think we need to rely on you and not only just but talking to your universities talking to your manufacturers, talking to your businesses and your community groups in the community on what is needed. Vincent and his team aren't necessarily going to know that, nor would I, as well as you do representing that area. So, I think that's really part of what we want to be able to come with a kind of shared vision for the region. Because if Greene County puts in for Plan A, Indiana County puts in for Plan B, and Butler County, Plan C, and Allegheny County, you know. I think what we'd like to do is be able to go to our congressional delegation with a vision, a consensus that we've reached, and I think we would get a lot of bipartisan support among the six congressmen and the two senators who represent us. Because I think if we go fragmented strictly on this, geographic area, or another geographic area, we probably won't be as successful so that's something I think we all want to keep in mind.

So, if you and your colleagues could get that information to Vincent, so that we can all hash that out through Commissioner Osche's Regional Policy Committee, we kind of hash some of those things out as to what we do want to put forth as a vision.

Katharine Kelleman commented that we are super excited to build the best region we can, and we cannot do this on our own. So, from the Port Authority of Allegheny County the doors are open, let's get everyone connected. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Katharine.

11. Adjourn

Nick Sherman moved to adjourn the meeting of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission and Commissioner Amadio seconded. Chairman Fitzgerald asked if there was more discussion. I don't want to cut anybody off if somebody has some things they want to say. Please, don't be shy, jump in, hit your mute button and jump in. Got to be quick. Hearing none, all in favor, signify by saying, aye. The affirmative vote was unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tony Amadio
Secretary-Treasurer