

**Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission**  
**Joint Transit Operators Committee (TOC) and Transportation Technical Committee (TTC)**  
**Meeting Minutes via Webex**  
**July 15, 2021, 10:00 a.m.**

**Two Chatham Center • Suite 500 • 112 Washington Place • Pittsburgh, PA 15219**

Attendees:

- Ann Ogoreuc, Allegheny County Department of Economic Development
- Darin Alviano, Armstrong County Planning Commission
- Joe West, Beaver County Planning Commission
- Joel MacKay, Butler County Planning Commission
- Jeremy L. Kelly, Greene County Planning and Community Development
- Josh Krug, Indiana County Office of Planning and Development
- Jason Theakston, Washington County Planning Commission
- Daniel Carpenter, Westmoreland County Planning Commission
- Kevin McCullough, PennDOT Central Office
- Jeff Skalican, City of Pittsburgh
- ❖ Mary Jo Morandini, Beaver County Transit
- ❖ John Paul, Butler Transit Authority
- ❖ Sheila Gombita, Washington County Transit Authority
- ❖ Ashley Seman, Mid Mon Valley Transit Authority
- ❖ Alan Blahovec, Westmoreland County Transit
- ❖ Lynn Manion, Airport Corridor Transportation Association
- ❖ Kathryn Schlesinger, Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership
- ❖ Mavis Rainey, Oakland Transportation Management Association
- Jennifer Crobak, FHWA
- Ronique Bishop, FHWA
- Khan Mitchell, FHWA
- Gene Porochniak, FHWA
- Chris Timmel, FHWA
- Laura Keeley, FTA
- Rich Fitzgerald, Allegheny County Executive
- Stephen Shanley, Allegheny County Department of Public Works
- David Wohlwill, Port Authority of Allegheny County
- Ed Typanski, Port Authority of Allegheny County
- Brendan Coticchia, City of Pittsburgh
- Austin McDaniel, Greene County Planning and Community Development
- Molly Sarver, Indiana County Office of Planning and Development
- Brandon Leach, PennDOT Central Office
- Matthew Crea, PennDOT Central Office
- Sam Plocinski, PennDOT Bureau of Public Transportation
- Tiffany Chaffee, Town and Country Transit
- Rich Keyes, Heritage Community Transportation
- Matt Pavlovsky, Port of Pittsburgh Commission
- Harold Swan, PennDOT District 10-0
- John Quatman, PennDOT District 11-0
- Angela Saunders, PennDOT District 12-0
- Rachel Duda, PennDOT District 12-0
- Bill Kovach, PennDOT District 12-0
- Josh Theakston, PennDOT District 12-0
- Darryl Phillips, HDR
- Lisa Kay Schweyer, Traffic 21
- Linda Conway, Delta Development
- Stephen Wiedemer, Michael Baker

Attendees cont'd:

Sara Woida, Skelly and Loy  
Joe Rusiewicz, TransSystems  
Vincent Valdes, SPC Executive Director  
Andy Waple, SPC Transportation Director  
Domenic D'Andrea, SPC Staff  
Ryan Gordon, SPC Staff  
Chuck Imbrogno, SPC Staff  
Tom Klevan, SPC Staff  
Vince Massaro, SPC Staff  
Erin Kepple Adams, SPC Staff  
Kristin Baum, SPC Staff  
Kim Beaver, SPC Staff  
Jared Bedekovich, SPC Staff  
Stephanie Cambic, SPC Staff  
Erika Eagan, SPC Staff  
Ken Flack, SPC Staff  
Lillian Gabreski, SPC Staff  
Shannon O'Connell, SPC Staff  
Evan Schoss, SPC Staff  
Greg Shermeto, SPC Staff  
Kathy Stefani, SPC Staff  
Sara Walfoort, SPC Staff

- **Indicates TTC voting member**
- ❖ **Indicates TOC voting member**

1. **Call to Order**

Andy Waple called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Rich Fitzgerald gave opening remarks, welcoming the FTA and FHWA members to the meeting as we go over the certification process. Rich Fitzgerald mentioned the necessity of SPC as they deal with the challenge of balancing the needs of a 10-county region, with creating long term projects for the TIP as well as other projects throughout the region, focusing on connectivity, equity, and sustainability. He mentioned the strong leadership of SPC from Vincent Valdes, and the collaboration efforts of SPC with the county leadership, as we all try to improve the quality of life in southwestern Pennsylvania, and we welcome the input of the members from FTA and FHWA. Andy Waple then gave a roll call for the TTC members and Dave Totten gave a roll call for TOC members.

2. **Overview of the Federal Certification Review Process**

Jen Crobak gave an overview of the federal certification review process, beginning with background of the need for a federal review. FTA and FHWA are required to review and certify the planning practices within the SPC Transportation Area (TMA) to determine how the region follows federal laws and regulations. The TMA's are any metropolitan areas with a population of over 200,000 people. This review occurs every four years, and the FTA and FHWA jointly conduct the review. The process involves a desk review of materials, followed by a virtual review meeting with SPC staff, PennDOT districts and Central Office staff, and Transit Operators staff. This is followed by a public presentation to gather feedback on the planning process, and afterwards FHWA and FTA will develop a report and present the findings back to SPC. The outcome of this review will be the report summarizing the discussions had during the review. FTA and FHWA will give out commendations for what SPC is doing well, recommendations for things that there is an opportunity for

improvement on, and corrective actions for things that SPC may not be meeting the regulatory requirements for compliance. Once those findings are completed, a certification action will be given, either certifying the TMA, Certifying the TMA with conditions subject to corrective actions, or not certifying the TMA.

Jen Crobak then gave some background information on the metropolitan transportation process, mentioning the continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive process by which transportation decisions are made and projects are planned and prioritized within the region. This 3 C's of planning is what shapes the planning process in the region. The continuing aspect is the updating of transportation plans, such as the transportation improvement program (TIP), which covers a 4-year planning period, and is updated every 2 years. Pennsylvania also has a mid-range plan of the 12-year planning period, which is updated at the same time as the TIP. There are also the long-range plans, which cover a 25-year horizon and is updated every 4 years in the SPC region. The cooperative aspect covers the various stakeholders in the region, who are given the opportunity to participate in collaborative discussions by sharing their perspectives and coming to a shared understanding of needs and a shared vision of the future. The comprehensive aspect looks at various different issues in the region to create an updated vision, including looking at the built environment, the natural environment, safety, and civil rights.

Jen then discussed the importance of the planning process, as the process is what decides how a substantial share of the federal funding is spent nationwide. Because of the limited funding, the TMA must prioritize the regional needs and determine the most effective solutions, laying the framework for the future. This comes from the involvement of many stakeholders, including MPO boards and committees, PennDOT, EPA, FHWA and FTA, Transit Operators, Resource Agencies. Local Jurisdictions, and citizens of the region. By the federal planning regulations, and what has been reviewed by the FTA and FHWA over the course of the review, include the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), the Congestion Management Process (CMP), the Public Participation Plan (PPP), Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The PPP plan is key to all other planning products that are developed, with the UPWP highlighting planning activities, projects, and cost, as well as planning priorities, which is then scheduled and updated through the LRTP, which is then prioritized in a short-term vision through the TIP.

### 3. **Public Comment**

Jen Crobak provided the opportunity for public comments on the federal review, stating that public input is an important part of the review process and any highlights of best practices or effective ways that the public has been involved. These comments will help to determine the effectiveness of the transportation planning and programming process, and also offered an email address if comments would rather be written out instead of shared, with a due date of July 30<sup>th</sup>. There were no comments from the public.

### 4. **Planning Partner Discussion**

Jen Crobak also provided the opportunity for planning partners to give their comments on the federal review, as this would also help with the federal review process. Mary Jo Morandini commented that the agendas for the transit operators committee meetings and the joint TOC/TTC meetings provide more than adequate opportunities for participation in the transportation planning and programming processes. She mentioned that a wide array of topics is covered based on the projects that are worked on by the SPC, the transit agencies, and regional entities such as the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership, and that she is quite satisfied with the planning process. Ann Ogoreuc commented that she agrees with Mary Jo, especially with the variety of topics covered in the meetings, and that she feels there is more than adequate opportunities to

participate in the planning process. Ann mentioned the frequency of cross-sharing of information across the committees, mentioning information shared at a meeting such as CommuteInfo would be discussed during TTC and TOC meetings as well. Ann also mentioned the opportunities to hear about projects throughout the entire planning process, from original design up through construction.

Joe West mentioned that SPC does an excellent job of communication and providing everyone with information for their region's transportation projects and giving people the available information for every project. Steven Shanley reiterated what Ann stated previously, and mentioned that SPC has been a great partner for Allegheny County Public Works, and has been really helpful in providing the public works with information on a number of challenging projects. Jeremy Kelly mentioned that SPC does a great job of keeping a smaller county, such as Greene County, in the loop with the planning process, and have been very helpful in keeping the county up to date on what's going on in the area. Kevin McCullough also commented that there has been challenges and complexity with a number of projects in the area, and Kevin would like to compliment SPC on their abilities through those challenges. Kevin mentioned their outreach efforts and the number of committees that SPC creates involving CMAQ and safety projects. Kevin thanked SPC for their flexibility in scheduling meetings, and making project moves, such as amendments and schedule changes, happen as smoothly as possible.

5. **Action on June 16<sup>th</sup> TOC Meeting Minutes**

A motion was made by Sheila Gombita and seconded by Mary Jo Morandini to approve the minutes of the June TOC minutes as presented. The TTC approved.

6. **Action on June 17<sup>th</sup> TTC Meeting Minutes**

A motion was made by Ann Ogoreuc and seconded by Joe West to approve the minutes of the June TTC minutes as presented. The TTC approved.

7. **Action on Modifications to the 2021-2024 TIP**

A. Transit TIP Amendments

David Wohlwill and Ed Typanski went over two amendments for the Port Authority of Allegheny County. The first amendment was for improvements associated with Bus Rapid Transit route from Downtown Pittsburgh to East End destinations, including road reconstruction, Transit Signal Priority, Battery-electric BRT vehicles and charging stations and other improvements and equipment. The port authority's request will add \$19,285,801 of federal 5307 American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 funds to the TIP to continue final design and advance into the construction phase of the Downtown-Uptown-Oakland-East End BRT project. Sheila Gombita made a motion to approve the amendment, and was seconded by Mary Jo Morandini, and the motion was approved unanimously.

The second amendment was for electric chargers and associated infrastructure improvements at the East Liberty Garage to support 15 battery electric buses in bus rapid transit service. The port authority's request will add \$5,150,000 of federal 5339 Bus and Bus Facilities Low-No 2021 funds to the TIP to start design and advance into the construction phase. David Totten asked the question of how many electric busses are on the street today. David Wohlwill answered that there are 2 currently in service, with another 4 busses scheduled to be delivered during the third quarter this year. Mary Jo Morandini made a motion to approve the amendment, and was seconded by Sheila Gombita, and the motion was approved unanimously.

B. PennDOT District 10-0

Harold Swan went over the one amendment and three administrative actions for PennDOT District 10-0. The first amendment was for a bridge preservation of the existing structure carrying US 422 over the Connoquenessing Creek, Shearer Road, and a railroad in Butler Township, Butler County. The district requests to program preliminary engineering and add \$375,000 (100% Federal utilizing toll credits) in FFY 2021. The source will be the SPC District 10 Highway/Bridge Line Item. The first administrative action was for a signal replacement, installation of turn lanes, and corridor improvements to enhance safety and reduce congestion along PA 68 from just east of Township Road #425 (Stevenson Road) east to the intersection with SR 3007(Meridian Road/Benbrook Road) in Connoquenessing and Butler Townships, Butler County. The district requests to increase the utility phase and add \$150,000 (80% Federal and 20% State) in FFYs 2021 and 2022 to maintain two lanes of traffic at all times during construction and additional impacts to overhead and underground utility facilities within the temporary widening portion of the roadway that were not anticipated. The sources will be \$120,000 from the CMAQ line item and \$30,000 of state funds from the District 10 Highway/Bridge line item.

The second administrative action was for a safety improvement project includes roadway realignment, bridge replacements, continuation of a truck-climbing lane, and turn lanes at intersecting roads along PA 28 from 0.53 mile north of SR 1027 to 0.3 mile south of SR 1016 (Calhoun School Road) in Boggs and Wayne Townships, Armstrong County. The district requests to advance a portion of construction funds from FFYs 2023, 2024, and 2025 to FFY 2021. The sources will be \$666,800 Federal and \$166,700 State of surplus construction funds from the South of Cooperstown Bridge #1 project, \$577,600 Federal and \$144,400 State of surplus construction funds from the South of Cooperstown Bridge #2 project, \$1,170,640 Federal and \$292,660 State of surplus construction funds from the South of Cooperstown Bridge #3 project, \$411,169 State from low bid savings from the US 119 – Marshall Road to Jefferson County project, \$500,000 State of surplus construction funds from the Philadelphia Street Bridges Group project, and \$3,016,176 Federal and \$499,631 State from the SPC District 10 Highway/Bridge Line Item. The third administrative action was for surplus state funds being placed back into the SPC District 10 Highway/Bridge Line Item. The district requests that \$39,600 of surplus utility funds in FFY 2022 and \$512,300 of surplus construction funds in FFY 2023 from Straight Run Bridge #2 project, \$341,750 of surplus construction funds in FFY 2024 from Marion Center Bridge #1 project, and \$255,040 of surplus construction funds in FFY 2024 from Rural Valley Bridge #4 project to be placed back into the SPC District 10 Highway/Bridge Line Item.

Josh Krug made a motion to approve the amendment and administrative actions from PennDOT District 10-0, which was seconded by Jeff Skalican. The motion was approved unanimously.

C. PennDOT District 11-0

John Quatman went over the three amendments and four administrative action for PennDOT District 11-0. The first amendment was for a mill and overlay, minor structure improvement, curb gutter repair, replacement of the existing median guiderail, structure repair (minor), signalization improvements, and drainage improvements, located on SR 2040 (Lebanon Church) from Ceco Drive to Brownsville Road in Baldwin, West Mifflin, Pleasant Hills Borough in Allegheny County, as well as SR 885 from Clairton Road to Lebanon Road. The district requests the addition of a right-of-way phase in the amount of \$950,000, with the source of funding being state funds available under SR 28-A760 and SR 51-04A. The second amendment was for a bridge preservation project, located on Bridge Ramp "B" over Conrail Railroad, 4th Ave, and Ross St. in Tarentum Borough, Allegheny County. The district requests additional funding to the currently active construction project for additional work, with the source of funding from various deobligated funds. The

third amendment was for a study phase for access ramps onto I-376, located from Bates Street to I-376 in City of Pittsburgh, Allegheny County. The district requests to add a study phase for Bates Street access to I-376 in conjunction with County request.

The first administrative action was for a bridge rehabilitation/replacement project, located on SR 3015 (Cochran Mills Road) over Lick Run Creek in Jefferson Hills Borough, Allegheny County. The district requests to advance funding to allow capture in 2021. The second administrative action was for mill and resurface including interchange ramps, base repairs, guide rail, drainage, structure preservation, pavement markings, signs and delineation, Traffic Signals, ITS, Highway Lighting, located on SR 28 - Harmarville to Russelton in East Deer, Frazer, Harmar and Springdale Townships, Allegheny County. The district requests to advance funding to 2021 to allow usage of funds in outer years. The third administrative action was for a bridge replacement project, located on SR 3035, Weyman Road Bridge over Saw Mill Run in Whitehall Borough, Allegheny County. The district requests to defer funding, as the project let date has been moved to late 2022. The fourth administrative action was for a highway reconstruction project, located from Fort Pitt Boulevard to Sixth Avenue in the City of Pittsburgh, Allegheny County. The district requests the addition of funds to the planning and engineering phase in 2021 to allow AC conversion and invoice payments.

Dominic D'Andrea mentioned that he was excited to see some of the projects progressing forward, including Route 68 in District 10-0 where a corridor study was undertaken, and Lebanon Church Road in District 11-0 where a road safety audit was conducted. Both of these studies had project suggestions made in them, and to see some of those suggestions turn into projects which are now being implemented, is really good to see happen. Ann Ogoreuc made a motion to approve the amendments and administrative actions from PennDOT District 11-0, which was seconded by Joe West. The motion was approved unanimously.

#### D. PennDOT District 12-0

Angela Saunders went over the four administrative actions for PennDOT District 12-0. The first administrative action was for the replacement of the structure carrying SR 4029 (W&W Railroad Road) over Dillie Run, located in Washington Township, Greene County. The district requests to add the Right of Way and Construction phases to the TIP in FFY 2021, with the funding sourced from the District Highway/Bridge Line Item (MPMS# 76508). The second administrative action was for the replacement of the structure carrying SR 2025 (Ankney Hill Road) over Welty Run, located in Mt. Pleasant Township, Westmoreland County. The district is requesting to increase the Preliminary Engineering phase in FFY 2021 and add the Final Design phase to the TIP in FFY 2022. This project will be fully funded on the FFY 2023 TIP, and will be sourced from the District Highway/Bridge Line Item (MPMS# 76508). The third administrative action was for the replacement of the structure carrying SR 3001 (Wheeling Creek Road) over Crabapple Creek, located in Richhill Township, Greene County. The district is requesting the addition of a construction phase in the FFY 2022, and will be sourced from the District Highway/Bridge Line Item (MPMS# 76508). The fourth administrative action was for preservation activities for the Layton Bridge, located in Layton Borough, Fayette County. The district is requesting the addition of a construction phase in FFY 2021, and will be sourced from the District Highway/Bridge Line Item (MPMS# 76508).

Joe West made a motion to approve the administrative actions from PennDOT District 12-0, which was seconded Jeremy Kelly. The motion was approved unanimously.

## 8. **2023 TIP Update**

Ryan Gordon began the 2023 TIP update with a mention of Rob Miskanic from District 11-0, who will be retiring at the end of July, in order to thank him for his years of service to the TTC. Ryan then went over the recent first round of TIP work group meetings, thanking the participants for those meetings. He mentioned the next round of meetings, which will be August 2<sup>nd</sup> at 1pm for District 12-0, August 3<sup>rd</sup> at 10am for District 11-0, and August 5<sup>th</sup> at 10am for District 10-0. Currently SPC is organizing the comments received from the public comment period, as well as the comments from the 2021 draft TIP, which will be sent out in advance of the meetings. Ryan mentioned that any transit-related comments coming out of this review will be shared with SPC's multimodal staff who will be able to share with the TOC. Ryan also mentioned that Port Authority was the only transit group that was invited to the first work group meeting, however the invite will extend to the other transit group after the first iterations of the highway/bridge pre-draft TIP have been completed at a future work group, probably in October or November.

Tom Klevan went over the transit side of the 2023 TIP update, first encouraging any transit operator staff to attend any work group meeting for the TIP that they are invited to, as they would learn a bunch of information on projects that are planned around the region, as well as the prioritization process at the district level. Tom went on to discuss the schedule for the Transit portion of the TIP, mentioning that Dave Totten will be sending out a schedule and the financial guidance for projects within the next week. Each project sponsor will soon be receiving the project carryover spreadsheets, noting which projects have not been obligated yet, in order to accurately reprogram carryover projects into the upcoming years. Tom mentioned that new for this update will be one on one meetings with transit staff in order to discuss project development and ways to set up programs and projects to help with discretionary funding opportunities which may be new and upcoming.

Andy Waple went over the upcoming timeline for the CMAQ program application period. Although the schedule is still tentative, the application period looks to open on August 23<sup>rd</sup> and close on September 24<sup>th</sup>. From closing through December will be application project review and technical scoring by the SPC and CMAQ evaluation committee. There will be TTC action to endorse the projects at the December TTC meeting, with presentation to the commission on December 13<sup>th</sup>. The tentative dates for the CMAQ committee meetings will include one meeting the week of October 4<sup>th</sup>, a second meeting the week of October 25<sup>th</sup>, a third meeting the week of November 15<sup>th</sup> and a fourth meeting (if necessary) on December 2<sup>nd</sup>. Draft program guidance will be sent out for the CMAQ program sometime within the next month for discussion at the next TTC meeting.

## 9. **Update on Marine Diesel Engine Retrofit Project - Port of Pittsburgh Commission**

Matt Pavlovsky gave a presentation on the Marine Diesel Engine Retrofit Project for Port of Pittsburgh Commission, beginning with an overview of the commission. The Port of Pittsburgh Commission was created in 1992, and encompasses twelve counties in southwestern Pennsylvania. The Port of Pittsburgh covers 200 miles of navigable river, 17 locks and dams, 130+ terminal facilities, and 13 local and regional barge lines. It is the 27<sup>th</sup> busiest port in the United States, and handled 21.6 million tons of cargo in 2018. Over a ten-year span, an average of 30 million tons of freight passes through the port each year, as moving freight by water as opposed to land provides a cost savings of more than 30%.

This freight is mostly via towing vessels, which currently 120 towing vessels are currently used in the Port of Pittsburgh. To date, the Port of Pittsburgh Commission (PPC) has retrofitted 25-30% of the existing fleet. Many of these vessels are operating on older engines which have been in service since the 1950s-1980s. These vessels are considered Tier 1 in air quality, and The PPC Diesel Marine Retrofit Program is hoping to improve these engines to a Tier 3 standard. The goals of this retrofit will be to improve marine vessel emissions and efficiency, create and sustain local jobs for the commercial river shipping industry, and to reduce roadway

traffic in the Pittsburgh region by reducing large-scale freight movement on roadways and railway crossings. In 2013, Port of Pittsburgh applied for the FHWA Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program. This Port of Pittsburgh Commission received an award of \$11 million in reimbursement funds, with a 50/50 cost share of industry investment and CMAQ funds. This is to be used for marine diesel projects, such as boats, and any replacement for related parts that go into making sure the system vessels are operating, including labor costs.

From start to finish, a marine diesel retrofit can take anywhere from 2 to 9 months to complete. When the project was conceived, it was estimated to be around a 3 to 4 month program, however after delving onto the projects they can take a much longer time. Project contracts are set up for a one-year program to complete a retrofit, between the initial application to approving the project timeline, to taking a vessel offline and out of service, to doing the repairs and retrofitting. Depending on the size of the vessel and the size of the company, the time undertaken to complete the retrofit is different. Also depending on the age of the machines and gears, some may potentially need to be sent overseas for repair work, which adds time as well. Every month, a progress report is made on the project and a check in is established. Quarterly invoices are collected, as well as labor costs, and a final report and closing of the project is completed with an onsite visit in which they must re-fire the vessel, and provide quality certifications from the engine manufacturer and the Coast Guard, stating it has met the current standards. Lastly, the previous engine must be destroyed, on order to not have the engine set aside or sold for profit.

Currently, 35 vessels have been retrofitted, with \$9.1 million of CMAQ funds. Matt gave a case study of Campbell Transportation, who began a retrofit of four vessels in 2020. This cost \$2.2 million per vessel, with \$1.1 million share in CMAQ funds. The vessels upgraded original non-tier engines to Tier 3 diesels, which use high energy emission control technology to achieve NOx reductions 80% below the Tier 1 levels. Fuel consumption was reduced by 10% to 18% on the vessels, Matt mentioned the reduction of greenhouse gasses from the addition of these new diesel engines, as well as the addition of keeping jobs on towboats, such as pilots, engineers, and deck hands, viable for the future, as well as the shipyard and repair facility positions needed for the retrofit, including engineers, electricians, equipment and crane operators, and labor/maintenance workers. The Port of Pittsburgh has recently been featured in numerous articles regarding the success of the CMAQ Marine Diesel Retrofit project, including at the International Maritime Transportation Conference.

Matt ended with a comparison of freight movement on the water compared to on land. With congestion rising on roadways, significant investment has and is being made on inland waterways, and the capacity is there to move more freight. The comparison was made that one barge equals 15 jumbo rail cars or 58 semi trucks, and a 15-barge tow could move as much freight as 225 rail cars. Ann Ogoreuc asked the question if the Port of Pittsburgh will reapply to the CMAQ program for another round of retrofit projects. Matt mentioned that they are, and are hoping to extend the retrofits into deck side cranes to Tier 3 (or Tier 4 with natural gas), which also haven't been upgraded since the 1950s in some cases. Kevin McCullough mentioned that it was great to see these kinds of projects coming into fruition, as these types of non-traditional projects can be difficult to manage, and the amount of work done by Port of Pittsburgh and SPC has been great to see as it is delivered and completed.

#### **10. Regional Broadband Connectivity Improvement Program**

Andy Waple gave a presentation on the Regional Broadband Connectivity Improvement Program, beginning with some background on the project. The provision of high-speed internet emerged as one of the region's most pressing needs during the SPC's Expert Resource Panels and a comprehensive public engagement campaign. A survey conducted in 2018 concluded that over half of the survey's 1000+ respondents found that



the provision of high-speed internet should be the most urgent technological force of change the region should address over the next 25 years. Because of this, the long-range plan *SmartMoves for a Changing Region*, adopted in 2019, provided multiple strategies centered around technology and connectivity. The solution to this was to start development on the regional connectivity improvement program, which will help examine the true state of the region's broadband connectivity in relation to the socioeconomic and demographic composition of the region. The hope is to ensure the recommendations that come out of the program will help equitably serve the region's most vulnerable populations who are underserved by high-speed connectivity. This will come from a broad coalition of stakeholders to guide development, developing a data-driven approach to equitability and systematically address underserved areas within the region, pursuing funding for connectivity programs and projects, recommending a governance structure to assist implementation in the future, and working with the direct partnerships to ensure the implementation.

The first phase, which is just wrapping up, will be the data collection phase. The existing conditions analysis will assess the regional and community's broadband-related coverage, speeds, resources, gaps, and needs in relation to the regions demographic and socioeconomic conditions. It will also examine connectivity and resources in relation to the region's businesses, education and medical facilities. Connectivity and equity indexes were created in support of this process, which takes the broadband speed data and overlays it on the environmental justice and Title 6 data to paint a picture on the underserved areas in relation to vulnerable populations in the region. The second phase of the program will be engagement with the public and stakeholders, with a kickoff meeting at the end of the month with a top-rated consulting firm. This outreach will include developing a regional advisory committee of 35 to 50 members, a multifaceted public awareness campaign (websites, social media, community packets, etc.), community outreach, constituency building and storytelling, connectivity equipment and pricing surveys, and industry expert outreach. Workshops will be held with a broad vision of regional stakeholders, which will help to synthesize a set of SMART goals and strategies through the use of the Decision Lens Priority Analysis Model, with help from the steering and regional advisory committees.

There will be a number of measures of effectiveness, which will include levels of service (speed and coverage), reliability of service, affordability of service, equity and digital inclusion, digital literacy levels, number of households, businesses, and institutions served, opportunities for workforce investment and training, and new jobs created. Overall, the project development will create a funding resource matrix, and an implementation roadmap with deployment areas and technology, potential hurdles, project deliverability and financing, first and last mile connectivity, job creation, and project prioritization. Lastly, the program will look at best practices from around the region to develop a set of potential avenues for a governance structure to oversee and administer the project and program for the region. Phase three is still ongoing development, however the consultant firm will be retained for 3-5 years, who will act as support for the implementation of projects and to provide services such as data collection and analysis, public engagement and stakeholder collaboration, legislative support, grant writing, and project mobilization. Project schedule began in May with the RFP for consultants issued, with phase 1 ending at the end of 2021. Phase 2 will begin in January of 2022, with a tentative ending date in June of 2024, when the on-call agreement ends.

#### **11. Planning Partner Project Updates**

David Wohlwill gave an update on Port Authority's draft of their long-range plan, comprised of projects system-wide and proposed improvements to the major corridors in Allegheny County. David mentioned that a prerequisite to everything else in the plan was to set up a new bus garage, which was mentioned during the amendments earlier, which will give an additional 6 electric busses this year and an additional 15 electric

busses during the BRT expansion later. He also mentioned a new website, [www.nexttransit.network](http://www.nexttransit.network), where you can download the draft report. There will also be 4 open houses, the first coming on July 21<sup>st</sup> at 10am, the second on July 22<sup>nd</sup> at 3pm, the third on July 29<sup>th</sup> at Market Square, and the 4<sup>th</sup> on August 10<sup>th</sup> at 4:30pm. You can register for the online open houses on the NextTransit website as well.

**12. Other Business/Status Reports**

There was no other business or status reports to update.

**13. Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn was made by Mary Jo Morandini. The motion was passed unanimously and Andy Waple called for the adjournment of the meeting at 11:59 AM.