

Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission  
Minutes of the Meeting  
February 28, 2022 – 4:00 p.m.  
Cisco Webex Meeting

The one hundred and fifty-third meeting of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission was called to order by Chairman Leslie Osche.

Members: Darin Alviano, Jennifer Beer, Mike Belding, Brad Berlin, Kevin Boozel, Scott Bricker, Tom Ceraso, Douglas Chew, Rich Fitzgerald, Ed Gainey, Shelia Gombita, Mark Gordon, Joe Grata, Kelly Gray, Sherene Hess, Mark Hilliard, Diana Irey Vaughan, Fred Junko, Katharine Kelleman, Sean Kertes, Clifford Levine, Larry Maggi, Jack Manning, Jeff Marshall, Betsy McClure, Kevin McCullough, Leslie Osche, Johnna Pro, Mavis Rainey, Aurora Sharrard, Nick Sherman, Byron Stauffer, Gina Cerilli Thrasher, John Timney, and Vince Vicites.

Others: Ann Ogoreuc, Allegheny County Economic Development; Jake Wheatley, Chief of Staff to Mayor Gainey, Barb Kipp, DCS Consulting, Jennifer Crobak, FHWA PA Division Office, Dusty Kirk, Legal Counsel to SPC, and 5 call-ins.

Staff: Kirk Brethauer, Ronda Craig, Dom D'Andrea, Linda Duffy, Margaret Fonner, Chuck Imbrogno, Steve Meredith, Shannon O'Connell, Ailisa Sobien, Vincent Valdes, Sara Walfoort, and Andy Waple.

1. Chairman Osche called to order the February 28, 2022 meeting of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission.

- a. Quorum – There being a quorum present the meeting proceeded.
- b. Any Conflict of Interest Declaration on Action Items – None

2. Action on Minutes of the January 31<sup>st</sup> Meeting.

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the January 31, 2022 meeting by Rich Fitzgerald which was seconded by Larry Maggi. The affirmative vote was unanimous.

3. Public Comment – None

4. Financial Report – Margaret Fonner

Margaret reported on the budget as of December 31, 2021. As of December 31, revenues and expenses were about \$5.9 million, which is about 42.8% of our budget of \$13.9 million. We're right on track where we need to be and expect no significant updates in the coming months. We will try to get an updated budget out for review for the next monthly meeting.

5. Presentation on the findings from our 2021 Federal Certification Review – Jenn Crobak, FHWA PA Division Office and Laura Keeley, FTA Region III

Jenn Crobak, Planning Program Manager for the Federal Highway Administration Pennsylvania Division Office, spoke about the federal transportation certification review process.

- FTA & FHWA are required to *review and certify* the planning practices within the SPC Transportation Management Area (TMA) to determine how the region follows federal laws and regulations
- TMAs are metropolitan areas with a population of 200,000 or more
- The review occurs once every 4 years
- FTA & FHWA jointly conduct the review

There are several steps to the review process.

- Desk Review
- Virtual site review with MPO staff, PennDOT Districts and Central Office Staff, and Transit Staff
- Public presentation at Joint Transportation Technical Committee/Transit Operators Meeting to gather feedback on planning process
- Develop Report and Present Findings

Summary of Findings

- Review found SPC's transportation process substantially meets Federal requirements
- FHWA and FTA certified the transportation planning process with:
  - ✓ 15 Commendations
  - ✓ 10 Recommendations
  - ✓ No Corrective Actions

Highlights:

❖ Multimodal Planning

**Commendations:**

- Data collection and analysis included in the design of the SmartMoves ArcGIS map with respect to the transit planning layer
- Serves to paint a picture of transit in the region, and makes clear that the intentional use of data will guide the future direction of transit development
- Development of the Regional Active Transportation Plan for Southwestern Pennsylvania
- Continued support of national, state, and local freight planning initiatives and activities
- Developing a stand-alone freight plan that integrates all transportation modes (truck, rail, air, water) in the region

❖ 3 C's of the Transportation Planning Process

The 3 Cs are the basis for metropolitan planning. MPOs are required to conduct the metropolitan planning process in a manner that is continuous, cooperative, and comprehensive, and provides for consideration and implementation of projects, strategies, and services.

**Commendations:**

- The 2019 MOU clearly explains the roles and responsibilities for each agency and satisfies the requirements of 23 CFR 450.314(h)

**Recommendations:**

- Develop standard operating procedures for how significant planning documents are developed and document how SPC's transportation planning committees' function, and interact
- Ensure that the region's strong planning practices can be carried forward into the future

❖ Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) & Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)

**Commendations:**

- SPC's collaborative TIP process
- Excellent visualization tools
- Early initiation of the 2023 TIP development process for Transit Projects and active role and responsibility for the transit portion of the Pittsburgh TIP
- Identification of needs for bridges and pavements to determine illustrative tradeoffs, and examine the funding gap throughout the life of the LRTP
- Development of a landslide susceptibility model

**Recommendations:**

- Recognize SPC and PennDOT Districts are still evaluating how to best incorporate BAMS/PAMS into their planning process
- Recommends PennDOT collaborate with Districts and MPOs to develop training and additional guidance on how to use BAMS/PAMS in the planning process

❖ Congestion Management and Operations

**Commendations:**

- Unique approach to the CMP which provides a comprehensive data platform to identify corridors of interest, track operational data and performance measures, and facilitate project selection and evaluation
- SPC's ROP balances the diverse input and needs of stakeholders in the region, across seven thematic priorities
- Regional Traffic Signal Program

**Recommendations:**

- Consider expanding CMP documentation and formalizing the process by which the CMP, as well as its component corridors and strategies change over time
- Consider introducing additional performance measure to its CMP which capture the impact of active mobility and transit usage

Discussion and Next Steps

- Meet with MPO and PennDOT staff to prioritize recommendations
- MPO to consider and integrate Recommendations into Work Program tasks
- FHWA/FTA and PennDOT provide technical assistance

Jenn took the moment to thank the Commission members for their time to share the findings and thanked SPC staff, PennDOT District 10, 11 and 12 staff, PennDOT Central Office staff and the staff of all the transit providers who participated in the certification review process. She explained that it's about a six month process that we've been working on over the last year and we really appreciate all partners' willingness to share their documents to come to the table to

talk through how they do planning in the region. And we really wanted to highlight the great work that's been done in the region right now and continue to carry those forward in the future.

*Questions:*

Leslie asked relating to the bridge and pavement asset tools, is that something that's already existing that we would just be incorporating into a process?

Jenn replied that yes, that is right. The Bridge and Pavement Asset Management Systems, BAMs and PAM's, are two different systems that PennDOT experts have developed. They look at different ways to incorporate transportation performance management, asset management approach to identifying the best projects to do at the best time to be able to achieve what we call lowest lifecycle costs. So, it's kind of investing at the right time to get the most out of our pavement and bridges. It's one of these new technical tools that PennDOT has developed and is being made available to our planning partners and the districts as well, to start to consider and to look at, in addition to the expertise that the PennDOT districts have, and PennDOT staff have to see how that could inform the planning process. These tools are in their early stages and are just now being incorporated to the process.

Kevin McCullough added that obviously there's a financial piece to that anytime you have financial changes or additions that can change your outputs. It's one of the tools that we use, and certainly when it regards to performance measures, which is now a federal requirement. SPC does a great job of utilizing that tool with our three engineering districts from a performance measure standpoint. You've heard us talk about safety, congestion, Bridge and Pavement Asset Management, those, again, are all fantastic tools to use. It's just another thing that helps us select the best bridges and roadways for the amount of money that we have. He also added that there is a transit investment tool as well. that does look at resources, and helps to select projects and assets on that side of the ledger.

Leslie then said you all may be familiar with this landslide susceptibility. Is that a tool as well or is there a modeling?

Andy Waple said we developed a tool on staff here. It's a GIS based tool that takes into account soil conditions and hydrology, and erosion and things like that. And it is basically a web map based tool that you can go in and take a look at where the most susceptible areas for landslides are across the region. It is for the 10-county region. It was developed based on a model that Minnesota DoD uses that was customized for our region. What we use it for is when we go in and look at candidate TIP projects. If there's a candidate project, or if there's a project in that area that's already planned or programmed on the TIP, we can go ahead and start discussions with the districts or the county or the city or whoever the roadway owner is or that and maybe employ some preventative measures, incorporating into the project that can help make it so that you can help to remediate landslides before they happen, essentially. We had tested for a while as you may recall the big landslide we had on Route 30 in eastern Allegheny County a few years ago. When we started to test this and looked at every case across the region, it lit up that area just almost perfectly right to where the slide occurred. And we've done it in a few areas across the region most of you are familiar with, where the part of the jig, the physic physiographic province in Appalachia that is most landslide susceptible, almost in the whole country. It's really this area from southwestern Pennsylvania, down through West Virginia, and into Kentucky and Tennessee. There's I think 250 or so active slides, as we speak, throughout

the region. Most of them are centered around PennDOT District 12 in Washington and Greene counties, and also PennDOT District 11. District 10 is affected to a lesser extent, but it's just another tool that we use in screening projects and looking for opportunities to remediate things before they happen.

## 6. Message from the Executive Director – Vincent Valdes

Vincent said he mentioned last month that the Department of Energy is interested in designating for hydrogen hubs around the US. The goal is to provide up to \$2 billion per region for creating a new energy sector cleaning up industrial production regionally, and generating new high paying jobs. He felt that part of his job is to raise the national awareness here for the benefit of our region. There have been a couple of developments since he last spoke about it. On February 15, DOE actually did issue a public request for information to gauge interest from the private and public sectors around the country in moving forward with the idea of hydrogen hubs, four of them nationally. What we know so far is that three regions have been identified as likely candidates based on their histories, on their current workforce, the potential for their future workforce, and importantly, the presence of raw materials. The three regions that have already been looked at are New Mexico, the area around Houston, Texas, and the tri state area of Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Ohio. At this point, there's probably not going to be an actual grant program coming out of DOD till late spring, maybe early summer, but SPC wants to start reaching out to potential partners like Pat Getty, at the Benedum Foundation to talk about what kind of regional tri state proposal would look like. It's really super important that we start marshaling our forces now. He and Jenn Lasser have been working on this, along with Sara Walfoort on staff. As new opportunities and new information develops, we'll certainly be reporting back to you all, so that we can again position ourselves as a region to take advantage of this exciting new proposition.

The second item he mentioned is SPC has been invited to participate in an Economic Development Roundtable to be convened by Senator Bob Casey on March 16 in Washington DC. It's going to be a three hour session. That's going to cover a few topics including a vision for Pennsylvania economic development over the next 10 years, how to implement the infrastructure bill to its best use, and how to link brownfield redevelopment with economic revitalization. Again, it's a very exciting proposition convened by the Senator and we'll brief the Commission on the results of this session at the next Commission meeting. He said he was very much looking forward to having SPC participate in that very important session.

The last piece he wanted to bring to everyone's attention is at the Executive Committee and the Board meeting, we briefed on the reorganization of the SPC. But in detail, we're setting up a new Directorate for policy, environmental issues, and grant writing. We're recruiting for a new director for that part of the organization. This person will be responsible for regional policy development, environmental work, grant writing, and kind of establishing the SPC radar permanently on a national level. If you know of any good candidates, please send them our way. We're looking for a dynamic person who really wants to take the bull by the horns here. It could be a very exciting position.

Next Meeting Date – March 28, 2022, at 4:00 p.m.

## 7. Other SPC Business – None

8. Adjourn

Respectfully Submitted,

Pat Fabian  
Secretary-Treasurer