

**Southwestern Pennsylvania Full Commission
Meeting Minutes
SPC Offices – Terminal Building & Cisco WebEx Meeting
February 26, 2024
4 p.m.**

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

Members: Brian Allen, Darin Alviano, Tony Amadio, Mike Baker, Jennifer Beer, Brad Berlin, Kevin Boozel, Scott Bricker, Brian Burick, Douglas Chew, Tom Ceraso, Rich Cleveland, Mark Critz, Amber Davis, Rachel Duda, Scott Dunn, Jared Edgreen, Pat Fabian, Ed Gainey, Kim Geyer, Sheila Gombita, Mark Gordon, Robin Gorman, Kelly Gray, Bob Griffin, Lynn Heckman, Sherene Hess, Mark Hillard, Sara Innamorato, Charles Jones, Patrick Joyal, Fred Junko, Dan Kennedy, Brandon Leach, Clifford Levine, Bob Lesnick, Dave Lohr, Bob Macey, Larry Maggi, Jack Manning, Jeff Marshall, Betsy McClure, Kristin Mulkerin, Don Myers, Leslie Osche, Johnna Pro, Bob Regola, Chris Sainato, Anthony Shea, Nick Sherman, Byron Stauffer, John Timney, Vince Vicites, Barb Warwick, Jason Zang, and Blair Zimmerman

Others: Kyle Chintalapalli, Mayor Gainey's Office; Mark Rafail, Fayette County; Ernest Rajakone, County Executive Innamorato's Office; Jarah Doose and Pam Snyder, Buchanan Ingersoll and Rooney; and Dusty Kirk, Reed Smith LLP.

Staff: Bel Ayele, Mary Brangan, Kirk Brethauer, Faith Collins, Ronda Craig, Dom D'Andrea, Linda Duffy, Rich Fitzgerald, Lillie Gabreski, Ryan Gordon, Chuck Imbrogno, Tom Klevan, Jenn Lasser, Nick Mannone, Caitlin O'Connor, Jeremy Papay, DJ Ryan, Mason Secreti, Aaron Sims, Russell Singer, Josh Spano, Ailisa Sobien, Cathy Tulley, and Sara Walfoort.

1. Chairman Osche called to order the February 26, 2024 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 December 11, 2023 Meeting.

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the December 11th meeting by Commissioner Amadio which was seconded by Commissioner Fabian. The affirmative vote was unanimous.

3. Public Comment – None.

4. SPC Directors' Introductions and Department Responsibilities

Mr. Fitzgerald asked each Department Director to stand and introduce themselves and explain the responsibilities of their staff and department.

5. Transportation Improvement Program Update (TIP) – Dom D'Andrea

Fall 2023 (through end of this year)

- TIP Workgroup meetings (20) and project selection for Draft 2025-2028 TIP-Completed
- TA, CMAQ, and CRP Projects selected via competitive application processes-Completed
- First round PPP and Public Meetings for feedback-Completed

Winter 2023/2024

- Pre-Draft TIP completed and forwarded to PennDOT Central Office for review-Completed-PennDOT review ongoing

Spring 2024

- PennDOT review; AQ Conformity & EJ Analysis; document preparations-Started
- Smart Transportation Program solicitation -Application period open
- 30 Day Public Comment Period-including 11 public meetings (May 9-June 7) and Comment/Response documentation -Meetings being scheduled
- 2025-2028 TIP adoption at June, 2024 Commission meeting

Smart Transportation Livable Communities Program

Type: Reimbursement

Match: 20% non-federal (per project phase requested)

Available Funding: \$3 million/year, region-wide. Projects selected by competitive application process every 2 years. Planning studies and design proposal requests may not exceed \$250,000. Construction proposals may not exceed \$1,000,000, including construction inspection.

Other: Mixing of federal and state transportation funds, with differing matching requirements, within same project phase is *highly discouraged*

SPC Administered Program Federal Funding (STU)

Eligible Sponsors: SPC member county governments and the City of Pittsburgh may submit one project each, PennDOT Districts 10, 11, and 12 may submit one project per county in their district

Eligible Activities: Planning studies, preliminary engineering, final design, and construction (plus inspection)

Eligible Project Categories:

- Bicycle/Pedestrian Improvements
- Corridor Management/Congestion Reduction
- Intermodal/Transit Oriented Development
- Planning and Redevelopment
- Road/Intersection/Network Improvements
- Streetscapes/Traffic Calming
- Electric Vehicle Charging Stations

2024 Application Evaluation:

- SPC staff will evaluate projects using five STLC Transportation Themes:
 - Linking transportation investment and land use planning
 - Supporting Community Goals
 - Multimodal approach
 - Safety
 - Sustainability
- Other factors
 - Consistency with goals in our Long Range Plan
 - Partnering/collaboration on application
 - Environmental Justice
 - Funding/Project readiness

6. Strategic Initiatives and Policy Report – DJ Ryan

- Mr. Ryan introduced two resolutions related to climate pollution reduction grant from EPA, including implementation funding of over \$4 billion.
- Steering committee convened to discuss how to best apply for implementation funding, with over 100 organizations contacted and potential projects totaling over \$2 billion submitted.
- SPC requests EPA funding for a single amount to establish a locally competitive program for transportation alternatives and other projects.
- The steering committee and policy committee support SPC as the sole applicant for the region, with discussions on specifics of scoring applications to come.

7. Action Item – Adoption of Resolution 1-24, in support of SPC’s Climate Action Pollution Reduction Grant – DJ Ryan

A RESOLUTION OF THE SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA COMMISSION (SPC) to endorse SPC, in partnership with its member jurisdictions and interested regional stakeholders, in applying to the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Climate Pollution Reduction Grants Implementation Grant Program (CPRG-IG).

WHEREAS, the Climate Pollution Reduction Implementation Grant Program (CPRG-IG), established via the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act, provides funding in two phases. The purpose of the grant program is to implement greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions-reduction programs, projects, policies, and measures (collectively referred to as “GHG reduction measures,” or “measures”) identified in a Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP) as developed under a CPRG planning grant, of which SPC is a recipient; and,

WHEREAS, the CPRG-IG program has four key objectives: 1) to “Implement ambitious measures that will achieve significant cumulative GHG reductions by 2030 and beyond,” 2) to “Pursue measures that will achieve substantial community benefits (such as reduction of criteria air pollutants (CAPs) and hazardous air pollutants (HAPs)), particularly in low-income and disadvantaged communities,” 3) to “Complement other funding sources to maximize these GHG reductions and community benefits,” and 4) “Pursue innovative policies and programs that are replicable and can be “scaled up” across multiple jurisdictions”; and,

WHEREAS, in order for the region to remain competitive, any potential funding allocations must be distributed equitably and systematically; and,

WHEREAS, the Commission holds that the ten-county Southwestern Pennsylvania region must speak with one voice to the federal government on matter of regional importance such as the opportunities presented by the CPRG-IG program: and,

WHEREAS, SPC staff, who seek to serve as a convener for the leaders in our region, have been contacted by over 100 potential sponsors who wish to follow SPC’s lead in establishing a collective regional voice and unified strategy for presenting the best application to secure the necessary funds to execute their specific projects.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission declares that it will serve as the lead applicant for the region’s application to the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Climate Pollution Reduction Grants Implementation Grant Program with the goal to develop a locally competitive process for awarding funding on an equitable and systematic basis; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission encourages potential project sponsors for CPRG-IG to support this collective effort in order to speak with a unified voice.

A motion was made to approve Resolution 1-24 by Commissioner Boozel which was seconded by Commissioner Beer.

Commissioner Zimmerman expressed concerns about potential backlash from energy industry partners if Greene County supports green initiatives. Grant funding for projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including solar panels, energy-efficient buildings, and industrial decarbonization.

Commissioner Lohr expressed concerns about the impact of steel industry funding on local counties, including Fayette County.

Commissioner Ceraso asked if the Commission members will see a list of projects?

Commissioner Pro expressed concern that sub applicants will have equal opportunity for dollars.

Commissioner Gorman suggested Commission have control over the projects.

After much discussion, the Commission members agreed to amend Resolution 1-24 to include “after consultation with County Commissioners”.

A motion was made to approve “amended” Resolution 1-24 by Commissioner Levin which was seconded by Commissioner Boozel. Resolution 1-24 passed with Commissioners Lohr and Dunn voting opposed.

- Action Item – Adoption of Resolution 2-24, in support of the WATERWAYS Act (at Senator Casey’s request) – DJ Ryan

A RESOLUTION OF THE SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA COMMISSION (SPC) to Endorse The legislation to be proposed in the United States Senate by Sen. Bob Casey entitled the “Waterway Activation that Targets Economic Revitalization, Welcomes Activity, and Yields Success Act” or “WATERWAYS Act”

WHEREAS, the inland waterways of Southwestern Pennsylvania are a unique and valuable asset to our region’s vitality; and,

WHEREAS, SPC seeks to support policy initiatives that will utilize our inland waterways to move freight and recreational watercraft in order to benefit the regional economy; and,

WHEREAS, our region would benefit economically identifying ways to and directing federal investment toward the increase and improvement of freight use and economic development on our region’s inland waterways; and,

WHEREAS, Senator Bob Casey of Pennsylvania intends to introduce legislation that will create a task force on waterway freight diversification and economic development in the Ohio, Allegheny, and Monongahela River corridors that would be housed under the already-established Interagency Working Group on Coal and Power Plant Communities and Economic Revitalization.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission supports this legislation and Senator Casey’s efforts to support the economic development and freight diversification of our region’s rivers; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission directs staff to communicate said support and a copy of this resolution to Senator Casey and the other federal representatives whose constituencies reside in the ten-county Southwestern Pennsylvania region.

A motion was made to approve Resolution 2-24 by Commissioner Fabian which was seconded by Commissioner Boozel. The affirmative vote was unanimous.

- Build Back Better Regional Challenge Update – Jenn Lasser

Individual Grants Under BBB

1. SME Robotics Adoption (Catalyst Connection)
2. Robotics Manufacturing Hub (ARM)
3. Expanded Pathways to New Economy Careers (SPC)
4. Applied Robotics Startup Factory (Innovation Works)
5. Expanded Pathways to Entrepreneurship (Innovate PGH)

Regional Job Creation, Training, Equity, Entrepreneurship, Business Support, Cluster Growth all significant areas of focus.

Expanded Pathways

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

- Expand training & placement opportunities
 - Certificate, Apprenticeships, Advanced Degrees
- Build a vibrant & robust robotics ecosystem
 - Conduct outreach, build partnerships – goal of rooted businesses
- Clear pathways and wrap-around services for students & workers
 - Understand and remove barriers to employment
- Be responsive to needs of regional businesses
 - Establish training needs and talent strategies and deliver.
- Establish Regional Training Hubs
 - Serve business & workers – Train & Retain!

Build Back Better – Project 3

Partners & Performance

- RECO/Team
 - Data Collection & Analytics
 - Success Story – Communications Strategy Meetings, Tool Kit & Website/Dashboard
- Workforce
 - Work Based Training has started at WDB
 - WDB Committee formed & meets regularly
 - Success Story: Alignment of training policies across all WDBs
- Education
 - New co-horts and classes
 - Industry Committees being formed
 - Success Story – IUP Robotics Camp – summer 2023
 - Success Story – CMU Skills Training Projects
- Labor (UMWCC)
 - Hiring completed
 - Recruitment & training of trainees has started
- Industry Intermediaries (BotsIQ)
 - Started the Robotics pilot class
 - Now in Brick & Mortar location
- Industry Eco-System Builders (PRN)
 - New hire
 - Outreach being conducted
 - Survey work with regional employers

Success Story: Discovery Day

METRICS AND PERFORMANCE

- 7,300+ attend robotics events
- 1,000+ students started robotics & tech based training
- 30+ started work based training
- 10+ coal impacted started training
- 50+ enrolled into pre-apprenticeship
- Supportive services provided (gas cards etc.)
- Mitigation teams formed (removing barriers to employment)
- Data tracking – rural, urban, demographic and equity
- Still lots of work to accomplish over remaining grant

ROBOTICS DAY

- November 16, 2024
- 3700+ attendees
- Featured over 130+ organizations
- 900 students & 77 teachers from SWPA schools
- Robotics Talent Acquisition & Retention Workshop (50+ in attendance)
- Humans behind the Robots Programming
 - Highlighted training programs, partners and opportunities

8. IWG Rapid Response Team Update – Jenn Lasser

Workforce development and economic revitalization.

- Ms. Lasser updated the commissioners on the workforce investment board's progress, highlighting the need to connect with community colleges and workforce investment boards to ensure successful grant funding.
- Ms. Lasser suggested commissioners reach out to their local workforce investment boards and community colleges to make connections and ensure successful grant funding.
- EPA's Teri Dean leads rapid response team to aid coal power plant communities.
- Ms. Lasser highlighted SPC's local designation and ties to the region as reasons why they were chosen to lead outreach and stakeholder engagement for the IWG.
- SPC was chosen to start conversations due to their ability to build a table at which the conversations happen, as demonstrated through their planning activities and community capacity program.

Federal grant opportunities and capacity building in Pennsylvania.

- Ms. Lasser also highlighted the challenges of capacity building for federal grant opportunities, particularly for rural counties with low unemployment rates that may not accurately reflect their economic situation.
- The rapid response team from SPC is assisting the IWG's in hosting an in-person event in late spring/early summer to bring together strategic partners, including nonprofits, local government, and education.

Grants, orientations, and collaboration.

- Hosting an orientation for directors to showcase SPC's various services and receive feedback from attendees.
- SPC advocates for collaboration and lobbying efforts to secure funding for a \$62 million grant for the region.

9. Briefing on Resolutions 3-34 – Dusty Kirk

Ms. Kirk remarked At-Large member are not reference in SPC Bylaws, Resolution 3-24 should reflect the Bylaws and remove the At-Large members until more review of SPC Bylaws.

Commissioner Heckman made the motion to remove the At-Large members and Commissioner Edgreen seconded. The removal of At-Large members was unanimous.

10. Report of Nominating Committee and Action on Resolution 3-24 to Elect an Executive Committee and Resolution 4-24 Elect Officers of the Commission for years 2024 and 2025 – Lynn Heckman

A RESOLUTION OF THE SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA COMMISSION to elect the following members to the Executive Committee for calendar years 2024 and 2025.

- Allegheny County, Sara Innamorato
- City of Pittsburgh, Mayor Ed Gainey
- Armstrong County, Pat Fabian
- Beaver County, Daniel Camp
- Butler County, Leslie Osche
- Fayette County, Vince Vicites
- Greene County, Betsy McClure

- Indiana County, Robin Gorman
- Lawrence County, Daniel Kennedy
- Washington County, Nick Sherman
- Westmoreland County, Sean Kertes
- PennDOT, Kristin Mulkerin
- Governor's Appointee, Patrick Joyal
- Department of Community and Economic Development, Johnna Pro
- SPC Executive Director, Rich Fitzgerald, ex officio

A motion was made to approve Resolution 3-24 by Commissioner Fabian which was seconded by Commissioner Dunn. The affirmative vote was unanimous.

A RESOLUTION OF THE SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA COMMISSION to elect Officers for calendar years 2024 and 2025.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the following persons be and the same hereby are elected to serve as Officers of the Commission in the capacity set forth opposite their name below, from the date hereof until their successors are elected and qualified by the Commission:

- Pat Fabian, Chair
- Vince Vicites, Vice-Chair
- Betsy McClure, Secretary-Treasurer

A motion was made to approve Resolution 4-24 by Commissioner Macey which was seconded by Commissioner Boozel. The affirmative vote was unanimous.

11. Reminder of the next meeting date
Next Meeting Date – April 22, 2024

12. Adjourn – 5:14 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Betsy McClure
Secretary-Treasurer