

The Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission
Full Commission | Meeting Minutes
April 28, 2025
4 p.m.
The Terminal
42 21st Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15222

The one hundred and seventy-third meeting of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission was called to order by Chairman Pat Fabian.

Members: Brian Allen, Darin Alviano, Tony Amadio, Brad Berlin, Gil Berry, Douglas Chew, Mark Critz, Jesse DiRenna, Rachel Duda, Bonni Dunlap, Jared Edgreen, Pat Fabian, Ed Gainey, Kim Geyer, Aadil Ginwala, Sheila Gombita, Mark Gordon, Kelly Gray, Bob Griffin, Dan Grzybek, Sherene Hess, Mark Hillard, Sara Innamorato, Charles Jones, Fred Junko, Katharine Kelleman, Jeremy Kelly, Dan Kennedy, Sean Kertes, Brandon Leach, Bob Lesnick, Larry Maggi, Jeff Marshall, Betsy McClure, Amy McKinney, Kristin Mulkerin, Don Myers, Leslie Osche, Joylette Portlock, Johnna Pro, Bob Regola, Chris Sainato, Chris Sandvig, Byron Stauffer, Anthony Shea, Laura Sohinki, John Strate, John Timney, Vince Vicites, Barb Warwick, Jason Zang, and Blair Zimmerman.

Others: Art Cappella, Fayette County Planning; Pam Snyder, and Carol DelRosso; Buchanan Ingersoll and Rooney; and Dusty Kirk, Reed Smith LLP

Staff: Bel Ayele, Kristin Baum, Mary Brangan, Kirk Brethauer, Faith Collins, Ronda Craig, Julia Ferri, Rich Fitzgerald, Lillie Gabreski, Ryan Gordon, Anthony Hickton, Chuck Imbrogno, Jenn Lasser, Jen Liptak, Nick Mannone, Jeremy Papay, DJ Ryan, Mason Secreti, Evan Schoss, Ailisa Sobien, and Devon White.

1. Chairman Fabian called to order the April 28, 2025 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 February 24, 2025 Meeting.

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the February 24th meeting by Commissioner Geyer which was seconded by Commissioner Osche. The motion was unanimous.

3. Public Comment – Greg Boris

I recently spoke to you the roads and streets in our region. The good news is that while the first half of 2024 saw more traffic fatalities in Pennsylvania compared to the same period in 2023, the second half of 2024 saw a decrease. I've not seen any analysis of why this might be so.

I also noted that PennDOT in its 2024 STIP report set a target for more traffic deaths than in the previous report. I realize that this is, in part, reflects a rolling average of deaths, which, if Pennsylvania is like other states, went up per million miles traveled during the COVID years. The goal is far from ambitious.

I highlighted the traditional focus on traffic safety with the emphasis on education and less so on enforcement and engineering.

I spoke last time about enforcement. Speed is a major factor in traffic deaths...not a question of exceeding the speed limit, but going at a speed that will cause serious injury or death to whoever the vehicle hits. I closed by advocating for slower speeds in residential and urban areas with a call for better enforcement, suggesting the use of speed cameras for enforcement rather than calling on an overly stretched police force. This is beginning to happen with red light cameras. I also recognize that the use of speed cameras is dependent on state law.

Today I come to speak about engineering. First, a disclaimer...I am not an engineer. What I am about to say is not how to design our streets. Rather, my comments are drawn from several decades serving on an MPO board such as this one in another state, working with and learning from professionals (including civil engineers and federal, state, and local transportation planners), and observing what works (and what doesn't) in many communities.

There are several assumptions about vehicle crashes. These assumptions are that

- 1-crashes are caused by driver mistakes. Google searches reinforce this idea by noting sources that cite 80-90% of crashes are due to human error
- 2-crashes are accidents and mostly unpreventable
- 3-streets are designed to be safe, but people use them dangerously

These are myths. The reality is

- 1-there are many factors that contribute to a crash
- 2-many crashes are the result of factors which cities can address
- 3-streets are designed and built in a way that makes them dangerous even for careful drivers

At every crash where law enforcement is called a checklist of items about the crash is completed. This is filed with the state. The data is used by your staff to identify traffic crashes and disaggregates the data in many ways. The goal, in the end, is often to determine who is to blame.

It is said that the easiest way to get away with murder in America is to hit someone with a car. Charging someone in a motor vehicle death is rare. I know several people who killed a pedestrian while driving, apologized, and were never charged. I also have friends who were killed by drivers of vehicles and the driver experienced no legal consequences. I also am reminded of a relative of mine, at age 19, had a beer and several hours later while driving away hit someone and killed them. He blew .02 but the local state's attorney charged him with many things, including underage consumption. The young man didn't want the stress involved in all of this, accepted the plea deal offered, and spent time in jail.

I'm not here to pass judgment through my rear view mirror. I cite these as being the usual end points—apologize and get off, possibly file many charges leading to a plea bargain and a conviction—when a crash fatality happens. I think we need to go beyond that and do a deeper dive on what we know, paying attention to stretches of streets and roads that have many crashes, particularly fatal ones. We need to move beyond blame.

Besides looking at data and maps, people in communities know where certain streets and roads prove dangerous to them as pedestrians, cyclists, or drivers. I live on Washington Road in Mt. Lebanon where there are residences, schools, and churches packed along a two-plus mile stretch from the Uptown commercial district south to the Galleria. This corridor has a 35 mph speed limit, though many vehicles pass me when I'm doing the limit. More importantly is there are many residents who are reluctant to walk along this corridor on its narrow sidewalks abutting Washington Road. Their perception of danger is their reality and they act accordingly meaning little or no walking along Washington Road. We should listen to what people in our communities see as dangerous places.

So once a street or road segment is identified as being a problem, what should be done? Six years ago a good friend of mine moved to Rochester, NY right by the Museum and Science Center. He talked to me about how he enjoyed the many things to do in his new neighborhood. But he bemoaned how dangerous it was just to walk around (and he loves to walk). In December 2022 a neighbor of his was hit by a driver while walking his dog at an intersection with a marked crosswalk. Both the walker and his dog died.

In response, a private project engineer with a background in traffic safety partnered with residents and people interested in pedestrian safety to look closely at that intersection. Short, intermediate, and long term recommendations were developed and shared with city officials. The city of Rochester has begun a redesign of the intersection which was a long term recommendation. The short and intermediate term recommendations have not yet been acted upon. The county has instituted a Community Traffic Safety Team to identify dangerous design factors before crashes occur. On January 15 of this year another dog walker was hit at this intersection and luckily escaped serious harm.

Similar sorts of [analyses](#) with recommendations have taken place in many communities such as Indianapolis, Hyattsville (MD), Richmond (VA), Amarillo, State College, Charlotte, Denver, and others. I urge the Commission and the communities in the MPO to learn from these other communities and take us beyond blame. Do that deeper dive to move us to lower traffic deaths and serious fatalities.

I know that Commission staff knows about this. I recently attended their listening session and presentation in Dormont on Vision Zero. Their work on the Vision Zero initiative is moving us in the right direction. It is encouraging to see so many people on staff as part of this process. The work of staff to develop communities where all can get to what they need and want is important.

However, those of us around his table, and those at the Dormont meeting, probably are drivers. My guess is that most who attended that meeting drove. With 25-30 percent of the people in this MPO region being non-drivers, it seems to me that people who do not drive should have a few more seats at this table. Vision Zero activities need to be sure there is focused outreach to the non-driving community.

With this in mind I challenge each of you to walk, bike, or use transit for a non-recreational purpose at least once a week between now and the next Commission meeting. Then, at that next meeting I encourage you to place on the agenda time for each member to share what each of you learned in carrying out this challenge. Some of you may have participated in the week without driving last fall. That's an intense experience with small, but increasing, participation. My challenge may be an easier lift. Try it out.

During the Great Depression, the Empire State Building was constructed in 410 days. Since then building construction, particularly of that magnitude, has become more complex. Short- and medium-term fixes to road safety problems should not take this long, though that seems to be the case.

I call upon the commission, elected officials, and PennDOT to do what we know works—slower speeds, narrow lanes, bump outs, to name but a few. And, for the streets of our region we need to move away from the 85th percentile mythology. to make safety even a higher priority on the streets and roads in the region. Drivers need to be vigilant and not made to feel comfortable as they drive on our streets and in our neighborhoods.

Use the data. Try some immediate, low cost fixes. See if it works. If so, improve. If not, try something else.

4. Executive Director's Report – Rich Fitzgerald, Executive Director

- Upcoming County Commissioner Harrisburg Trip May 5
 - Meetings scheduled with several Cabinet Secretaries and Senior Legislators
 - County Commissioners: Please let DJ know if you plan to attend
- Transit Funding
 - Monitoring developments and have meetings scheduled with senior transportation staff
- Broadband Funding
 - Meeting with PBDA staff in Harrisburg
 - Update later in the meeting
- Several great events in the past few months
 - Washington County Housing Expo
 - Meetings with Regional Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs)
- 2026 NFL Draft
 - Pittsburgh is "On the clock!"
 - NFL Source Program - Local business preference
 - Transit discussions continuing
 - Will look for additional ways to plug County Leadership into the process
- Long-Range Plan Strategy/Orientation Commissioners' Workshop
 - May 16 in Armstrong County at the Meredith Inn

5. Transportation Report—Lillian Gabreski, Director of Transportation

Ms. Gabreski gave an update on the Transportation Department Activities:

Program Development

- US 422 Corridor of Regional Significance Plan framework completed and shared.
- Preparations for the **2027 TIP Development** are underway, including:
- Staff participation in Statewide Financial Guidance Committee
- Staff participation in Statewide General and Procedural Guidance Committee
- Assisting and promoting the STC pre-TYP comment period (Closes Wed 4/30)
- Scheduling TIP Work Group Meetings - County/City staff have been included
- Drafting SPC Competitive Program guidance
- Assisting in PPP orientation meetings
- Application period for the next round of **SPC Competitive funding will open June 2nd**
- Staff will host an informational webinar for prospective applicants to SPC's competitive programs on June 10 at 10:00am. We will be advertising this in May through all our committees and social media accounts.

Operations and Safety

- Regional Safety Action Plan is in draft stage – will be presented for adoption at the June Commission Meeting
- Allegheny County Safety Action Plan moving along – finalized late 2025/early 2026

Transit/Transportation Demand Management

- FTA Triennial Review June 3rd & 4th
- Subrecipient Monitoring of TMAs – completed
- Bike/Walk to Work Day – May 14th
- National Bike Month & CommuteInfo Commute Options Awareness Month Resolutions

6. Broadband Update – DJ Ryan, Director of Communications and Strategic Initiatives

Mr. Ryan updated the Commission on the Communication's Department Activities and introduced two new members to his Team. Melissa Brown and Mason Fish.

- PBDA Technical Subcommittee Meeting
 - Regular business and not much official news from NTIA
- PBDA rejected rules for equity implementation
 - This is a different program from the main BEAD funding
- Regular contact with PDBA and board members
 - No official changes from DC
 - PBDA Board has not yet moved forward with BEAD
- Commissioners should continue to educate Federal officials on their counties' priorities related to broadband

7. ACTION ITEM: Resolution 04-25 to proclaim May 2025 as "National Bike Month" in Southwestern Pennsylvania – Lillie Gabreski, Director of Transportation

A RESOLUTION OF THE SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA COMMISSION to proclaim May 2025 as "National Bike Month" in Southwestern Pennsylvania.

WHEREAS, throughout the month of May, Southwestern Pennsylvania will celebrate biking, and the freedom, joy, and wellbeing it brings to everyone in the region who participates in the activity;

WHEREAS, May 12-18, 2025 is “Bike to Work Week” and May 14, 2025 is “Bike to Work Day”;

WHEREAS, the residents of Southwestern Pennsylvania and visitors will experience the joys of bicycling by participating in rides, commuting events, educational programs, or simply by getting out and riding;

WHEREAS, bicycling contributes to improved public health, well-being, and quality of life, it strengthens the regional economy, attracts tourism, supports local businesses, and helps reduce pollution, traffic congestion, and parking demands;

WHEREAS, the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission, schools, parks and recreation departments, police departments, public health agencies, hospitals, businesses, and civic organizations will join the league of American Bicyclists in promoting bicycling during May 2025;

WHEREAS, these organizations also encourage year-round bicycle use for both transportation and recreation, which draws visitors to experience the region’s park, trail systems, restaurants, hotels, retail establishments, and cultural scenic attractions; and

WHEREAS, these groups are committed to increasing public awareness of safe bicycle operation and education throughout Bike Month and beyond by aiming to reduce accidents, injuries, and fatalities while improving road safety for all.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission does hereby proclaim May 2025 as Bike Month in Southwestern Pennsylvania and urges all residents to join in this special observance.

A motion was made to approve Resolution 04-25 by Commissioner Kellerman which was seconded by Commissioner Geyer. The motion was unanimous.

8. ACTION ITEM: Resolution 05-25 to proclaim May 2025 as “CommuteInfo Commute Options Awareness Month” in Southwestern Pennsylvania – Lillie Gabreski, Director of Transportation

A RESOLUTION OF THE SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA COMMISSION (SPC) to proclaim May 2025 as “CommuteInfo Commute Options Awareness Month” in Southwestern Pennsylvania.

WHEREAS, over 75 percent of the 1.2 million workers in the SPC region travel alone to work; and

WHEREAS, the region will have less traffic congestion and improved air quality if more commuters shared a ride; and

WHEREAS, ridesharing helps commuters save money; and

WHEREAS, SPC’s CommuteInfo Program serves as the region’s one-stop shop for ridesharing services by operating a customer-focused, full-service commuting resource center, by managing the region’s vanpool and carpool programs, and facilitating regional ridesharing coordination; and

WHEREAS, 115 commuters currently participate in CommuteInfo’s 23 registered vanpools, along with 264 registered carpools; and

WHEREAS, to ensure that all employers and commuters in the region are aware of all available commuting options, CommuteInfo not only sponsors vanpools and arranges carpools but also provides information on transit, promotes biking and walking, shares commuter safety resources, and offers details about the region’s park-n-ride facilities through its website (www.commuteinfo.org) or by calling toll-free 1-888-819-6110; and

WHEREAS, several events in May independently promote alternatives to driving alone, including National Transportation Week (as declared by presidential proclamation), National Bike Month, Bike Week, and Bike-to-Work Day (sponsored by the League of American Bicyclists), National Employee Health and Fitness Day (sponsored by the National Association for Health and Fitness), and National Clean Air Week (sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Weather Service); and

WHEREAS, CommuteInfo is planning a series of events in May to promote the benefits of ridesharing to the region and to increase awareness of CommuteInfo and its services at a time when national attention is focused on alternatives to driving alone.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that SPC encourages regional citizens to embrace the value of ridesharing by choosing it at least twice a week, and offers its support by proclaiming May 2025 as "CommuteInfo Commute Options

A motion was made to approve Resolution 05-25 by Commissioner Blair which was seconded by Commissioner Amadio. The motion was unanimous.

9. Workforce and Economic Development Report – Jenn Lasser, Director of Workforce and Economic Development

Ms. Lasser provided updates on small business support and export assistance.

- ARC POWER on Hold (NOSA in OMB)
- ARC Area Development and Local Access Road Funding applications due July 2025
- EDA new projects on hold til Commerce Budget approved
- USDA Rural - TBD

What does this all mean...

- Use this time to really develop shovel ready projects, partnerships and programs
- Keep on pushing and working on what we can control - we are still here to help!
- SPC continually recognized as a convener – happy to brainstorm project ideas

German American Chamber of Commerce Visit on March 14, 2025

- 15 Duisburg Delegates & Elected Officials
- CCBC Aviation School Groundbreaking
- DCED Visit to Westmoreland County
- Planning Director Forum hosted
- UPMC Workforce Discussions – WIB Connection
- Labor & Industry Conversation around Workforce
- University of Pittsburgh – Institute of Politics Event
- IUP – College of Osteopathic Medicine visit
- NADO/DDAA – Washington DC
- PREP/Engage Meeting hosted
- Discuss best practices
- Revitalization - ARC

Stakeholder Engagements and Visits

- CCBC Aviation School Groundbreaking
- DCED Visit to Westmoreland County
- Planning Director Forum hosted
- UPMC Workforce Discussions – WIB Connection
- Labor & Industry Conversation around Workforce
- University of Pittsburgh – Institute of Politics Event
- IUP – College of Osteopathic Medicine visit
- NADO/DDAA – Washington DC
- PREP/Engage Meeting hosted

She highlighted the impact of tariffs on businesses and the importance of developing shovel-ready projects. Discussed the Build Back Better grant and its impact on workforce development.

Introduced Dr. Nico Rose and Christine Ford from IUP to discuss their new medical school

10. IUP - Rural Healthcare - Dr. Miko Rose and Christina Koren

Dr. Nico Rose from IUP presented the new medical school's impact on rural healthcare, noting a \$1.3 billion annual economic impact if 60% of graduates stay in PA.

Emphasizes the focus on rural health and the need for more primary care providers. Highlights the unique approach to recruitment and retention of medical students. Invites community partners to collaborate on clinical rotations and housing for students.

Affiliate Agreements that are in place:

- Armstrong County Memorial Hospital
- Broad Top Area Medical Center
- Clarion Psychiatric Center
- Conemaugh Memorial Medical Center
- Conemaugh Nason Medical Center
- Hyndman Area Health Centers
- Indiana Regional Medical Center
- Nulton Diagnostics and Treatment Center
- Penn Highlands Healthcare
- Punxsutawney Area Hospital
- The Primary Health Network
- Torrance State Hospital

Clinical Partnerships –While all minimum clinical rotation requirements have been met for COCA accreditation standards, we continue to forge partnerships to ensure adequate physician pathways for targeted rural regions in greatest need.

On November 20, 2025 there will be a Rural Health Conference at the University of Indiana. She encouraged the Commissioners to attend.

11. ACTION ITEM: Resolution 06-25 to adopt the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan – DJ Ryan, Director of Communications and Strategic Initiatives

A RESOLUTION OF THE SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA COMMISSION to approve the 2025 update to the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan

WHEREAS, the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission is the federally-designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for the ten-county Southwestern Pennsylvania Region, responsible for planning activities across a wide range of issue areas including transportation and infrastructure, workforce and economic development, and other areas as the need arises; and

WHEREAS, Southwestern Pennsylvania has historically been a region of diverse ethnic backgrounds and a place where immigrants with their own language and culture find a welcoming home and a fulfilling life; and

WHEREAS, Southwestern Pennsylvania continues to be a region with many different ethnic populations whose perspectives are important to account for in the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission's planning activities, and;

WHEREAS, the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission believes it is necessary and wishes to continue to provide opportunities for those with limited proficiency of the English language to participate in the planning process in order for said activities to be comprehensive, cooperative, and continuing.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission hereby adopts and sets into immediate effect its 2025 Limited English Proficiency Plan as attached to this resolution; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission declares this Limited English Proficiency Plan to supersede all previously adopted Limited English Proficiency Plans; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission declares its intent that in whatever other documents and plans it has created that reference the Limited English Proficiency Plan that this newly adopted document should be considered as having replaced any previously inserted or referenced versions of the plan.

A motion was made to approve Resolution 06-25 by Commissioner McClure which was seconded by Commissioner Amadio. The motion was unanimous.

12. ACTION ITEM: Resolution 07-25 to adopt the Public Participation Plan (PPP) –
Ronda Craig, Public Involvement Coordinator

A RESOLUTION OF THE SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA COMMISSION to approve the 2025 update to the Public Participation Plan (PPP)

WHEREAS, the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC) is the federally-designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for the ten-county Southwestern Pennsylvania Region, responsible for planning activities across a wide range of issue areas including transportation and infrastructure, workforce and economic development, and other areas as the need arises; and

WHEREAS, SPC has a mandate from the federal government to ensure all its planning activities are subject to public scrutiny and that the needs of the public are considered at every stage of the planning process, and;

WHEREAS, SPC takes this mandate and its obligations to the public seriously, believing that the best way to ensure responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars is to conduct all its activities in as transparent and engaging a way as possible, and;

WHEREAS, SPC recognizes that it must make every possible effort to include all the region's residents in its planning activities, which mandates a robust and diverse array of opportunities for the public to be educated and to provide feedback to SPC on priorities and concerns related to the various issue areas in which SPC has a role.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission hereby adopts and sets into immediate effect its 2025 Public Participation Plan as attached to this resolution; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission declares this Public Participation Plan to supersede all previously adopted Public Participation Plans; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission declares its intent that in whatever other documents and plans it has created that reference the Public Participation Plan that this newly adopted document should be considered as having replaced any previously inserted or referenced versions of the plan.

A motion was made to approve Resolution 07-25 by Commissioner Blair which was seconded by Commissioner Osche. The motion was unanimous.

13. Other Business

Commissioner Fabian reminded the Commissioners about the May 5-6 in Harrisburg and May 16 Commissioners' Workshop in Armstrong County.

14. Reminder on Next Meeting Date – **June 23, 2025**

15. Adjourn – 5:35 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Betsy McClure
Secretary-Treasurer