

**The Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission**  
**Full Commission | Meeting Minutes**  
**October 27, 2025**  
**4 p.m.**  
**The Terminal**  
**42 21<sup>st</sup> Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15222**

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

**Members:** Darin Alviano, Brad Berlin, Scott Bricker, Douglas Chew, Bonni Dunlap, Scott Dunn, Jared Edgreen, Pat Fabian, Kim Geyer, Sheila Gombita, Mark Gordon, Kelly Gray, Bob Griffin, Dan Grzybek, Sherene Hess, Mark Hillard, Sara Innamorato, Charles Jones, Fred Junko, Dutch Kaufman, Katharine Kelleman, Jeremy Kelly, Dan Kennedy, Brandon Leach, Bob Lesnick; Jack Manning, Jeff Marshall, Betsy McClure, Kristin Mulkerin, Leslie Osche, Johnna Pro, Chris Sainato, Chris Sandvig, Nick Sherman, Byron Stauffer, Laura Sohinki, John Strate, John Timney, Vince Vicites and Blair Zimmerman

**Others:** Mavis Rainey; OMTA; Lisa Frank, Ed Gainey's Office; Jason Rigone, Westmoreland County Department of Economic Development; Chuck Kolling and Carrie DelRosso Buchanan Ingersoll and Rooney; Dusty Kirk, Reed Smith LLP; and David Tessitore, Citizen.

**Staff:** Bel Ayele, Kristin Baum, Mary Brangan, Kirk Brethauer, Melissa Brown, Faith Collins, Ronda Craig, Tiffany Cummings, Mason Fish, Rich Fitzgerald, Lillie Gabreski, Ryan Gordon, Chuck Imbrogno, Jenn Lasser, Jen Liptak, Jeremy Papay, DJ Ryan, Mason Secreti, Evan Schoss, Ailisa Sobien, and Devon White.

1. Chairman Fabian called to order the October 27, 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 August 25, 2025 Meeting.

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the August 25, 2025 meeting by Commissioner Osche which was seconded by Commissioner Sainato. The motion was unanimous.

3. Public Comment – Henry Posner, III.

Thank you very much Chairman. My name Henry Posner and I serve as Chairman of Railroad Development Corporation, which is a Pittsburgh based family-owned, international railway and investment and management company.

I also serve as Chairman of the Iowa Interstate Railroad, a freight line between Chicago and Omaha, Chairman of RDC Deutschland, a passenger train operator and rail asset owner in Germany, Chairman of Eurorail a rail freight and logistics operator in France, a director of TDI, a UK based producer rolling stock and a rail concession owner, and a director of Ferrocarril Central Andino in Peru, a freight railroad that is adding an urban passenger service at Lima.

I also serve as co-chair of the US Surface Transportation Board's Passenger Rail Advisory Committee, and as an adjunct faculty member at CMU, where I teach an undergrad course on railroad deregulation. Specific to the SPC. In the past, I've served as a member of the rail freight Advisory Committee and recently presented at your freight forum.

I provide the above background as evidence of my knowledge of our region, the region's transportation needs, and how those needs fit in the global context. But in addition to transportation, I also care deeply about proper governance, which comes partially from my family's legacy of philanthropy and commitment to the region.

My family's devoted significant time and resources to CMU and Winchester Thurston, where I serve Board Chairman and which resulted in my current service as a board member at ISCA, the National Organization for independent school board chairs. I say this to indicate my passion for the region and focus on governance. And the reason I'm here today is to express my concerns regarding the governance of SPC.

For the last five years, have been involved in a project that benefits both the region and save public money. This is the brilliant branch rail line between Homewood and Aspinwall, a rails with trails project that would increase access to safe affordable transportation for the Pittsburgh region through integration with Pittsburgh regional transit via the East Busway. This integration would link many communities, including Aspinwall, Homewood, Wilksburg, East liberty, Oakland, downtown Pittsburgh and the airport, by using infrastructure that is already in place. The brilliant branch would also help foster and bolster past investments in and around bakery square. CMU, as well as alternative modes of transportation and access, etc. For these reasons, the brilliant branch project has enjoyed support from the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, CMU, Pittsburghers for Public Transit, Mobilify, rail trail advocates, waterworks mall and others in the community.

But despite its significant support to date, the brilliant branch project has not yet been implemented, nor has it been endorsed and or supported by SPC. One must ask, why?

Given my passion for the region and belief in the project, I began to investigate SPC conduct and position regarding the brilliant branch. The results of my investigation raised serious questions regarding SPC governance. I attempted to raise these issues with SPC representatives, who refused to engage in a collaborative discussion regarding my concerns, and appear to have only taken acute action to protect self-serving interests.

To be very clear, however, I am not here today to argue about the implementation of the brilliant branch project. Rather, I'm here to publicly raise concern regarding SPC governance, which I believe underlies not only the fate of the brilliant branch globally, the credibility of SPC's mission and its certification as an MPO.

I remain open to engaging in a collaborative effort to address what appears to be SPC governance issues. Would appreciate knowing how this board, not the professional staff with whom we have dealt to date intends to proceed regarding this matter. I appreciate the opportunity for the first time to make this a matter of public record, and hope this will help motivate SPC to follow up in a more serious, collaborative manner that has been exhibited to date. Please note that I'm here today with my attorney, Lou DePaul. Lou DePaul is from Eckert Seamans. Eckert Seamans has collaborated with my family for four generations. Thank you very much. Now I do have copies of this, which I will be giving to all of you as I walk around the room.

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

- Mr. Fitzgerald provided an update on the trip to Washington, DC with the Allegheny Conference and the business community. The trip included meetings with congressional delegations and a reception with Senator McCormick.
- Highlighted the recent opening of the airport and the upcoming NFL Draft, which will benefit the tourism industry.
- The PPP-TIP meetings are ongoing, and the next four-year transportation plan is being developed.

- Funding announcements include \$39 million for 11 projects statewide, with significant investments in Allegheny County.

## 5. Transportation Report—Lillian Gabreski, Director of Transportation

Ms. Gabreski gave a transportation update:

- Ms. Gabreski provided an update on the DRC TMA certification review, which went well.
- The 2027 TIP development is underway, with 12 TIP worker meetings and six public meetings held so far.
- A regional trail development capacity and needs assessment study is being conducted, with stakeholder meetings and a survey launched.
- The Vision Zero Summit held by the City of Pittsburgh was a success, with SPC staff participating and presenting.
- The 2027 TIP project list is being developed, with a focus on delivering existing projects and minimizing new projects due to funding constraints.

## Competitive Programs

- Ms. Gabreski explained the competitive program selection process for the 2027 TIP, including the selection committee and the programs funded (CMAC, CRP, and TA).
- The current Surface Transportation Act is set to expire, and there is no guarantee these programs will exist in the next Transportation Act.
- The selection committee will review technical scoring and select projects that deliver the greatest benefit.

## 6. ACTION ITEM on Resolution 12-25 to Adopt the Title VI Compliance Plan, Lillian Gabreski, Director of Transportation

A RESOLUTION OF THE SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA COMMISSION ("SPC") to approve adoption of the updated Title VI Compliance Plan to maintain compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and other nondiscrimination mandates.

WHEREAS, The Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC), as a recipient; sub-recipient; and pass-through entity of federal financial assistance to certified sub-recipients is required to comply with all federal Civil Rights and Anti-Discrimination laws, including Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act; and

WHEREAS, this plan is intended to meet the requirements set forth by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to ensure nondiscrimination under Title VI and the aforementioned other federal statutes in federally funded activities; and

WHEREAS, the plan also provides an overview of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the prohibition under Title VI of discrimination on the basis of "race," "color" or "national origin," and how these are incorporated into the metropolitan transportation planning and programming process.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission approves adoption of the Title VI Compliance Plan;

A motion was made to approve Resolution 12-25 by Commissioner Vicites which was seconded by Commissioner Osche. The motion was unanimous.

7. ACTION ITEM on Resolution 13-25 to Adopt the Public Transit Agency Safety Plan, Lillian Gabreski, Director of Transportation

A RESOLUTION OF THE SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA COMMISSION to approve the submission of the Public Transit Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) for the CommuteInfo Regional Vanpool Program.

WHEREAS, the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission, as a sub-recipient of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Urbanized Area Formula (49 U.S.C., Section 5307) financial assistance to support the CommuteInfo Regional Vanpool Program, is required to comply with 49 CFR Part 763 - Public Transit Agency Safety Plan (PTASP); and

WHEREAS, pursuant to 49 CFR, Part 673.11, The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) is obligated to draft and certify a PTASP for small urban agencies (less than 100 vehicles operated in maximum service) that opted not to develop their own plans; and

WHEREAS, the CommuteInfo Regional Vanpool Program has utilized the PennDOT PTASP template and process intended for small urban transit agencies, which fulfills all applicable PTASP regulation requirements; and

WHEREAS, applicable recipients and States must certify compliance with PTASP regulation requirements.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission hereby approves the submission of the PTASP for the CommuteInfo Regional Vanpool Program dated October 2025.

A motion was made to approve Resolution 13-25 by Commissioner Osche which was seconded by Commissioner Sherman. The motion was unanimous.

8. Strategic Initiatives Report – DJ Ryan, Director of Communications and Strategic Initiatives

Mr. Ryan gave an update on the Strategic Initiatives:

- Mr. Ryan provided an update on the newsletter refresh and the importance of sharing community news and press releases.
- The freight plan is being updated, with a focus on safety, efficiency, and reliability.
- The CPRG program is ongoing, with meetings held in every county and community festivals attended.
- The Broadband Program is moving to an implementation phase, with a preliminary map approved.
- The EV infrastructure survey results are being compiled, and additional EV chargers will be proposed for community centers.

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

Ms. Lasser gave a Workforce and Economic Development update:

- Business Finance
  - 6 Loans in for FY 25/26
  - 2M+ in pipeline
- Export
  - Bring the Word to PA – Sept 12
- Water Resource Center
  - Chartiers Creek Support
  - Army Corps Project
  - CPRG Meetings

- DCED – PREP/Engage
  - Waiting on State Budget to pass
- ARC – Annual Training Conference (attendees)
- ARC – Grant Season Kicks off!
  - POWER/Area Development/ARISE
- Speaking Engagements
  - Data Centers
  - Workforce Needs
  - Rural Relationship Building
- Build Back Better
  - 10 months remaining
  - Thousands Trained
  - Semi-Annual Report
  - Robotics & AI Discovery Day
  - Nov 5<sup>th</sup> 2025
- Building Capacity
  - Working to secure additional dollars
  - Working to communicate with legislators on importance of LDD/EDD activities
- Workforce
  - Meeting with industry
  - Working with educational partners
  - Connecting to WIBs, CareerLinks and support programs
  - Brainstorming regional data and programming ideas to meet needs

#### Bring the World to PA Event

- September 12<sup>th</sup> 2025 @ CMU
- Annual event - hosted by SPC Export Team and DCED/REN
- Speakers included Secretary Rick Siger (DCED), Rich Fitzgerald (SPC), Ben Pratt (ACCD)
- Connected local business with 12 countries

#### Regional Progress Forum

- September 25<sup>th</sup> 2025 @ Heinz History Center
- Keynote speakers, panel discussions and data overviews from experts
- Discussions on impacts to rural and urban populations
- Workforce and education panels
- Where SWPA is headed economically and planning for future

#### Around the Region

- Bots IQ
- Slippery Rock University
- Western PA Conservancy (WPC)
- Small Business Food Industry Focus Group @ SPC
- ACCD Regional Investment Event
- ARC Frostburg MD
- ARC Appalachian Leadership Institute – Ashland KY

#### 10. Other Business

Chuck Kolling gave a brief update on the State budget. He stated that today the Governor and the Caucus leaders will be meeting. Hopefully, getting close to a resolve on the budget. The Senate \$47 billion budget and the House \$49 billion budget. Another meeting is scheduled after today's meeting.

Commissioner Fabian also remarked that Nominating Committee will be meeting to decide on the officers of the Commission. Darin Alviano will be Chairing that Committee, he will ensure your county has a representative ready for the Nominating Committee to select a new SPC Secretary.

11. Reminder on Next Meeting Date (December 15, 2025)

12. Adjourn – 4:51 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Betsy McClure  
Secretary-Treasurer