



Lehigh Valley Transportation Study

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Chair, Coordinating Committee

BRENDAN COTTER
Chair, Technical Committee

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Secretary,
Coordinating Committee +
Technical Committee

**Lehigh Valley Transportation Study
Minutes from the January 18, 2023
Technical Committee Meeting
DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC THIS MEETING WAS HELD VIA
WEB AND/OR CALL**

Prior to the meeting being called to order, Ms. Milagio stated that the agenda and materials for this meeting were posted on the LVPC website. She provided directions on how to participate in the virtual meeting and the protocol to allow the meeting to flow smoothly. The meeting was advertised in the Lehigh Valley Press on Wednesday December 28, 2022.

Mr. Brendan Cotter chaired the meeting.

Mr. Cotter welcomed the members and the public participants and called the meeting to order.

Ms. Milagio took Roll Call.

Attendees:

Technical Committee

Brendan Cotter	LANTA
Ryan Meyer	LNAA
Becky Bradley, AICP	LVPC
Darlene Heller, AICP (Alt)	City of Bethlehem
David Hopkins (Alt)	City of Easton
Jennifer Ruth	PennDOT District 5
David Alas	PennDOT Central Office

Members Absent: Matt Tuerk, Mark Hartney, William Reynolds, Sal Panto

Staff Present: Matt Assad, Julie Benco, Becky Bradley, Brian Hite, Hannah Milagio, Patrick Osei

Public Present: Scott Vottero, Dawn Godshall, Heather Heeter, Michael Emili, Vanessa Koenigkramer, Crystal Heshmat, Brian Harman, Tom Stoudt, Phillip Doherty, Brian Miller, Scott Slingerland, Jennifer Swann, Amanda Leindecker, Andrew Kleiner, Michael Dee, Ralph Eberhardt, Jennifer Swann, Anna Savruka

Courtesy of the Floor

Mr. Cotter opened the floor for public comments not included on the agenda, and there were none.

Minutes

Mr. Cotter stated that the last Technical Committee was held jointly with the Coordinating Committee on August 17, 2022. Ms. Milagio noted the actions voted on.

- Attendance
- Minutes from the November 16, 2022, meeting
- TIP Amendment #1 – Lower South Main Street over Martins Creek
- TIP Amendment #2 – 222 & Schantz Road & 863 Improvements
- Assessment of in-person/virtual formats for future LVTS meetings
- Adjournment

Mr. Cotter asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the Technical Committee Meeting on October 26, 2022. Mr. Hopkins made the motion for approval of the Technical Committee Meeting minutes, seconded by Mr. Meyer. Mr. Cotter asked for any questions or comments from the members and the public. Hearing none, Mr. Cotter asked Ms. Bradley to call for a vote. The motion carried, with one abstention from Ms. Heller and the rest of the members voting in the affirmative.

Old Business

PRESENTATION ITEM: PennDOT District 5-0 Highway Status Report

Mr. Cotter highlighted the PennDOT District 5 Highway Projects Status Report in the meeting packet, and noted that Mr. Vottero was going to review those projects. These include:

- US 22, Section WDN Widening
- SR 29, Section 04S Cedar Crest Boulevard Signal Upgrades
- SR 145, Section MLT 7th Street Multimodal Corridor
- SR 145, Section 14S Route 145 Signal Improvements
- SR 145, Section 13S Route 145 Safety Improvements
- SR 309, Section 14M Betterment
- SR 309, Section 12M 309 & Tilghman Interchange
- SR 1004, Section 03S Lehigh- Race Street Intersection
- SR 1017, Section 02S Mauch Chunk Signal Improvements
- SR 22, Section 15M SR 22/SR 191 Interchange Improvements
- SR 191, Section 04S SR 191 Lower Nazareth Intersection Improvements
- SR 248, Section 05S Route 248 Realignment
- SR 248, Section 06S Route 248 Signal Improvements
- SR 2018, Section 02S Freemansburg Ave (SR 2018) Safety Improvements

Mr. Cotter asked if there were any questions from members and the public, and there were none.

PRESENTATION ITEM: PennDOT District 5-0 Transportation Improvement Administrative Actions

Ms. Ruth noted that, from December 10, 2022 to January 6, 2023, there were two interstate, two statewide and three District 5-0 administrative actions. Ms. Ruth asked if there were any questions from members and the public on the administrative actions, and there were none.

INFORMATION ITEM: Lehigh Valley Passenger Rail Study Project Update

Ms. Bradley provided an update on the Lehigh Valley Passenger Rail Study. She noted that PennDOT has WSP under contract for the study and is working to schedule status/working meetings to start in the near future.

INFORMATION ITEM: Eastern PA Freight Alliance – Freight Infrastructure Plan

Ms. Bradley provided an update on the Eastern PA Freight Alliance – Freight Infrastructure Plan. She stated that WSP is working on the data analysis component of the Plan, and that results of the analysis are expected this winter. She will report to the LVTS as more becomes available.

Mr. Cotter asked what the projected completion date for the study would be, and Ms. Bradley stated that it would be September 30, 2023. She noted that the anticipated completion date was intentionally timed to coincide with Long Range Transportation Plan updates for the MPO partners. Ms. Bradley noted that the consultant for the project, WSP, feels confident about that deadline, and that they should have a draft available for review in June.

Mr. Cotter asked if there were any other questions from members or the public on this item. Ms. Swann asked if this study was a precursor to a passenger rail study, and Ms. Bradley noted that they were separate studies. Ms. Bradley also provided a brief overview of the Passenger Rail Analysis study report. Mr. Cotter asked if there were any additional questions, and there were none.

INFORMATION ITEM: Monthly Traffic Report

Mr. Hite noted that December holidays impacted traffic flows and patterns across all four continuous traffic counters in the region. Route 22 between Airport Road and the Lehigh River Bridge showed 100,735 vehicles on December 27. Route 33 near Route 248 registered 76,907 vehicles, similar to the December 2021 count. Interstate 78 near Route 309 reported 74,141 vehicles, and Route 309 near Coopersburg in Lehigh County had 34,425 vehicles. Mr. Hite stated that two counters collect classification data which showed commercial trucks. On December 27, Interstate 78 near 309 had 16,827, and Route 22 had 11,354 trucks. Mr. Hite stated that this downward trend may have been caused by an increase in retail goods in the fall to prepare for winter holiday shopping. There were also several days with sub-zero temperatures, where travel advisories were issued that may have affect traffic. Lastly, COVID-19 Pandemic supply chain disruption has caused a nationwide employment reduction in the manufacturing sector, impacting domestic inflation and international economies. Mr. Hite will be monitoring these trends in the months ahead, and he will also be looking at statewide trends to see if the downtick in December was similar across the state. Mr. Cotter asked if there were any questions from members or the public on the monthly traffic report, and there were none.

New Business**ACTION ITEM: Performance Measure 1 (PM1) Safety Target Setting**

Mr. Osei presented the proposed PM1 Safety performance measures for 2023. He stated that, in accordance with the federal rule (23 CFR 490) enacted to implement national performance management requirements, PennDOT and LVTS must establish safety target performance measures that apply to all public roads, regardless of functional classification or ownership, to select the most cost-effective investments for federal transportation funds. LVTS coordinated with PennDOT to establish the agreed-upon highway safety performance measures for project planning and programming to contribute to achieving PennDOT's safety goals. Each year, the LVTS technical and coordination committee must adopt the performance measure targets to be eligible for extremely valuable Highway Safety Improvement Program funds.

Mr. Osei noted that the rule requires PennDOT and LVTS to establish targets for five safety performance measures: number of fatalities, rate of fatalities, number of serious injuries, rate of serious injuries, number of non-motorized fatalities and non-motorized serious injuries. PennDOT made substantial progress toward fulfilling targets if the outcome of four of five performance metrics was better than the baseline, but preliminary data shows that Pennsylvania did not meet its 2022 targets and will be subject to the rules of 23 U.S. Code 148. (i). This means that PennDOT must complete and submit an implementation plan that identifies gaps, develops strategies, action steps, and best practices, and a financial and performance review of all HSIP-funded projects because it did not meet the goal. This implementation plan is due June 30, 2023.

Mr. Osei explained charts that were shown to demonstrated to show targets for the five performance safety measures, both at the statewide and regional level. The 2023 targets for the LVTS are based on a data-driven trend analysis of the regional fatality and suspected serious injury numbers, in which a 2% annual fatality reduction and maintaining a level of suspected serious injuries was targeted. The new targets are based on that baseline, which ends in 2021, and not 2022. The Target proposed is 43.9. In 2021, the LVTS serious injury crash increased from 205 in 2020 to 259 in 2021, indicating that improvement is needed, and the proposed target for serious injuries is 240.

Mr. Osei noted that the LVTS is required to adopt the Performance Measure 1 targets for safety by February 27, 2023. The Federal law gives MPOs two options: work with the DOT to establish targets or create your own. We recommend the Technical Committee adopt the jointly prepared safety targets to the Coordinating Committee for their meeting on February 15th.

Mr. Cotter asked if there were any questions or comments from the committee, and there were none. Mr. Cotter noted that the NEPA MPO adopted this performance measure at their January meeting, and that it is a common practice for MPOs across the state to adopt PennDOT's targets. Mr. Cotter asked for a motion for a recommendation to the Coordinating Committee setting the Performance Measure 1 Safety Targets for 2023. Ms. Heller made the motion to recommend that the Coordinating Committee set the Performance Measure 1 Safety Targets for 2023, and Ms. Bradley seconded the motion. Mr. Cotter asked for any questions or comments from the members and the public. Hearing none, Mr. Cotter asked Ms. Bradley to call for a vote, and the motion carried.

INFORMATION ITEM: Long Range Transportation Plan Update

Ms. Bradley stated that most MPOs are currently in the process of updating their Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The LRTP is a federally required document that the LVTS must update on a four-year cycle, and was last updated in 2019. The upcoming LRTP update must be adopted by September 30, 2023. Although the 2019 update was combined with the bi-county comprehensive plan for Northampton and Lehigh Counties, this revision must only address the transportation components. The bi-county comprehensive plan is updated based on Pennsylvania state laws, while the LRTP is updated based on federal laws.

Mr. Hite noted that a 20-year planning horizon for transportation investments for LRTPs is required to be maintained. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) encourages a 25-year horizon to accommodate any plan amendments occurring between updates that could cause the planning horizon to drop below the 20-year minimum. The current LRTP was enacted in 2019, and a revision is required before September 30, 2023, the end of the federal fiscal year.

He shared that the LRTP outlines a fiscally constrained financial plan for funding transportation infrastructure. It is achieved using performance-based planning, including safety, bridge, and pavement assets, and ensuring efficient use of the region's resources, public funding, and other assets. Each LRTP update identifies population, economic development trends and the many forces shaping the region, works with the public and stakeholders, and recommends strategies to achieve transportation goals based on data and public input which establish needs. LVTS will ultimately have to prioritize these needs in the revisions to the LRTP.

Mr. Hite stated that on November 15, 2021, the Infrastructure, and Investment Jobs Act (IIJA), also known as the Bi-Partisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), was signed into law. This legislation provides additional funding opportunities and an enhanced focus on various transportation elements. These new components of transportation planning and programming will affect project prioritization and allocations, as the revised LRTP must align with identified focus areas of the law. Specifically, while enabling the Lehigh Valley to maintain, repair and rebuild our roads and bridges, it will also align with a focus on climate change mitigation, resilience, equity, and safety for all users, including cyclists, pedestrians and the mobility impaired. Improvements and enhancements to healthy, sustainable transportation options through Complete Streets initiatives and an equity focus with Justice40.

He noted that Section 11202 of the IIJA clarifies that for purposes of developing a financial plan under a metropolitan transportation plan, any years beyond the 4-year transportation improvement plan horizon shall be considered outer years for purposes of financial plan requirements. The first part of the project funding lists in the revised LRTP will need to align with the adopted 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program. By Executive Order 14008, the Federal Government has mandated that 40 percent of the overall benefits of certain Federal investments flow to disadvantaged, marginalized, underserved, and overburdened communities. Equity and environmental justice, as well as climate concerns will factor into this new requirement. PennDOT is providing the State's Planning Partners

opportunity to utilize new Decision Lens software to assist in the prioritization of projects to meet the newly stated IJJA goals.

Ms. Bradley shared the LRTP Revision Timeline, which will help inform and direct the LVTS Technical Committee as the LRTP process develops in 2023. PennDOT and USDOT coordination is anticipated throughout, as well as associated compliance activities. Currently, data collection, Decision Lens set up, and an update to the Travel Demand model are underway. Much of the data collected to update the LRTP will also support future updates to the Safety Plan, Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan, and Congestion Management Process.

She noted that the staff will be conducting at 12 public meetings or more with specific subregions to gather project recommendations for consideration for the updated project list. These meetings meet the equity and Justice40 requirements for the LRTP update. During the last two LRTP updates, an open call for projects was announced, but only communities that had higher financial resources and capacity submitted projects. Utilizing subregional meetings will help staff more equitably gain insight into projects and priorities for those specific subregions. It is important to note that the LVTS is the only MPO in Pennsylvania that asks for projects from the public, continuing the LVTS's commitment to equity.

Ms. Bradley stated that staff will upload collected information from those meetings into the Decision Lens from mid-March to mid-April to analyze project impacts, and to understand where potential projects align with safety corridors, congestion corridors, and other key components required by USDOT. New equity requirements mandate that forty percent of overall benefits and investments must flow to disadvantaged, marginalized, underserved, and overburdened communities. This process will help to establish priorities and evaluate investment strategies. She also noted that April and May will include potential policy changes and project list discussion(s) with the LVTS Coordinating and Technical Committees, a revised LRTP text draft, and changes to the fiscally constrained and unmet needs project lists.

She stated that, in June, projects will be run through the Travel Demand Model for Air Quality Conformity and Environmental Justice Impacts, the draft document will be designed, and coordination with state and federal partners will occur. Per the adopted Public Participation Plan, the final draft document will be posted to the website and physical copies will be delivered to accessible locations throughout the region for public review. The 30-day public review and comment period will begin on June 30. In July, public meetings for additional comments will be hosted, and the public review and comment period will close on August 1. Public comments will be presented to the Coordinating and Technical Committees on August 16, and any final revisions to the LRTP will be made. Adoption for the LRTP must happen at the September 20 LVTS meeting to meet the federal deadline.

Mr. Cotter noted that the LRTP update is a big undertaking that will require everyone's active participation to produce a quality product, as well as to showcase the region and potentially secure additional funding. He asked if there were any questions or comments from the members or the public, and there were none.

PRESENTATION ITEM: Greenhouse Gas Inventory Assessment

Ms. Benco reported on the Regional Greenhouse Gas Inventory, which estimates emissions within Lehigh and Northampton counties for the baseline year of 2019. This inventory was developed through the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's Local Climate Action Planning program alongside the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) and Moravian University. It consists of six sectors – Residential Energy, Commercial Energy, Industrial Electricity and Gas, Transportation & Mobile Sources, Solid Waste, and Water and Wastewater. The estimates capture most of both county's greenhouse gas emissions. The inventory represents emissions in "carbon dioxide equivalent" values, which is a measure that converts the concentration of other gases within the atmosphere to the equivalent amount of carbon dioxide with the same global warming potential.

The Lehigh Valley's gross greenhouse gas emissions for 2019 was 9.8 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent, or roughly 14.6 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent produced for every resident in the region. Those numbers mean the Lehigh Valley is emitting 3.7% of Pennsylvania's total statewide gross greenhouse gas emissions. More than 60% of the emissions come from industrial electricity and natural gas, or transportation sources, and the next largest emitter is Residential Energy, at 20%. The Inventory results provide information that is key to guiding regional and local reduction efforts and provide a baseline against which the region will be able to compare and demonstrate progress in reducing emissions.

Ms. Benco noted that, based on the data and sectors from the 2019 inventory, the LVPC created a forecast for each sector through 2049 that is an estimate of emissions under certain assumptions. This Business-as-Usual scenario is a type of forecast that assumes no new actions or policies are adopted for the purpose of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The Lehigh Valley's Business-As-Usual forecast is based on regional population and employment growth rate projections.

The Transportation sector forecast is additionally based on the federally mandated Corporate Average Fuel Economy standards, that over time requires reduced fuel consumption and better efficiency for vehicles. Those mandates will cause emissions in the transportation sector to decrease dramatically over time, and are included in the forecast model. An increase in electric vehicles in the coming years would also cause this sector to show even greater reductions of emissions. All other sectors within the inventory, however, are expected to grow through 2050. The results of the Regional Inventory and the forecast indicate that an effective plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions would need to give priority to industrial electricity and gas uses.

Altogether, Lehigh Valley's greenhouse gas emissions are projected to grow from 9.8 million Metric Tons of CO₂e in 2019 to over 10 million Metric Tons of CO₂e in 2049. This represents an average growth rate of 0.05% per year and a cumulative increase of 1.5%. Future greenhouse gas emissions within the Lehigh Valley will be impacted by multiple factors, such as population, employment, land use patterns, economic activity, energy efficiency and transportation habits. Despite a sizable reduction in the transportation sector, the expected growth of the region will still cause overall emissions to increase. Deliberate action by residents, organizations, businesses and governments can greatly influence the trajectory of such future emissions.

Ms. Benco shared that the forecasts and regional inventory will serve as a basis for analyzing, developing and prioritizing emission reduction strategies for the region's first climate action plan that will be launched and completed in 2023, and will also factor into the revision of the LRTP. The Lehigh Valley Climate Action Plan will establish emission reduction targets for the region and include an assessment of the region's vulnerabilities to climate change that will identify assets or resources that may be most at risk in the Lehigh Valley. Climate action goals, objectives and measures will be developed with the completion of the vulnerability assessment. To achieve the goals and objectives of the CAP, an implementation plan and a monitoring process will be developed that outlines how to measure the success of each action and the Climate Action Plan as a whole.

Ms. Bradley noted that the LVTS is awaiting further guidance from the USDOT on the specifics of carbon reduction planning per the IIJA, and that she anticipates this to be a platform for the region to work towards more sustainability and resiliency for the LRTP revision and long into the future. The final report of the Greenhouse Gas Inventory, primarily authored by Ms. Benco, is expected shortly. Ms. Bradley thanked Ms. Benco for her work on the Inventory, and noted that the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission is following the LVPC's lead and utilizing this same strategy for climate action.

Ms. Savruka stated that, despite the narrative that increased electrification will help consumers facilitate a cleaner environment, she believes this is a false argument because industry will continue to consume more and that most electricity comes from burning fossil fuels. Electric cars also require the use of semi-

precious metals, the extraction of which has environmental implications, as well. She encouraged the future Climate Action Plan to keep an open mind and not rely on short-term solutions, and she noted that the only way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions was to have more efficient systems that allow less consumption. She expressed concern that changes to reduce greenhouse gas emissions were happening too slowly.

Mr. Slingerland echoed Ms. Savruka's concerns. Mr. Slingerland asked what percentage of transportation emissions came from personal vehicles versus freight vehicles, what the "mobile sources" listed in the transportation report included, and whether wood-burning emissions from homes was included in the data. Ms. Benco noted that the transportation data is based on the LVPC's Travel Demand Model, which is only divided into "gasoline powered" and "diesel powered" categories. Ms. Benco believes that wood-burning emissions are included in the residential data, and that there will be a further breakdown of the data in the upcoming Greenhouse Gas Inventory document.

Ms. Swann asked that the LVPC consider including the local Environmental Advisory Councils in the planning process for the Climate Action Plan. Ms. Bradley noted that the LVPC will be handling the Climate Action Plan through the WorkshopLV format, and that the EAC Network will certainly be invited to participate in that process.

INFORMATION ITEM: WorkshopLV: Freight Working Group Items

Ms. Bradley stated that, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the LVPC hosted a variety of public engagement meetings through WorkshopLV. These meetings will return in 2023, and more information will be provided when it is available.

Ms. Bradley noted that the Northampton County Freight Based Land Use Management Guide was completed and adopted by the LVPC. The guide is a valuable tool for municipalities to update their subdivision and land development ordinances and zoning to mitigate the impacts of freight, and to make recommendations to improve the communities in which they exist or are proposed. The Guide is available on Northampton County's Community and Economic Development website. The LVPC will create the Lehigh County Freight Based Land Use Management Guide in 2023.

Ms. Bradley shared that Urban Land Institute, Philadelphia and Green Building United are hosting a virtual forum on sustainable warehouse development on January 26. During the event, a panel of experts will present and discuss recent trends and findings on how warehouse development is impacting land use decisions, zoning and transportation infrastructure in the Lehigh Valley and beyond. Registration is available at www.Philadelphia.uli.org/events.

INFORMATION ITEM: Public Engagement and Participation

Mr. Assad shared that the most recent Plan Lehigh Valley radio show focused on the evolving housing market with Lehigh Valley Realtors CEO Justin Parembo and LVPC Senior Planner Jill Seitz. The show focused on the housing sales environment, as well as data that shows that a lingering housing shortage and inflation are making it more difficult for people to afford a home. The show is now streaming at www.wdiy.org.

Mr. Assad stated that the most recent Business Cycle column explored the current challenges in home buying and renting facing many Lehigh Valley residents. The column can be found at www.mcall.com and at www.lvpc.org/news/v.

Mr. Assad noted that PennDOT's Green Light Go program is accepting grant applications until January 31. The grant program is for municipalities to apply for funding to replace or modernize their traffic signals, and a 20% match is required. The application is available through PennDOT's Traffic Signal Portal.

Mr. Hite stated that the Local Technical Assistance Program's (LTAP) Build a Better Mousetrap Competition is now accepting entries. LTAP is looking for items that municipal employees or road crews designed and built that increase safety, reduce costs, or improve efficiencies to transportation related items and infrastructure. Nominations can be made on PennDOT's LTAP website, under the news section. Entries are due by Friday March 3.

Mr. Hite reviewed the upcoming virtual classes through the Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP). Upcoming classes include Bridge & Culvert Inspections for Municipalities (1/31, 8 AM – 11 AM), Maintenance Techniques for Stormwater Control Facilities (2/2, 11 AM – noon), Traffic Signals Basics (2/3 8 AM – noon), Project Estimating Using Mathematical Principles (2/7, 8 AM – 11 AM), Erosion and Sediment Control (2/14, 8 AM – noon), Traffic Counts (4/6, 11 AM – noon), Speed Data Collection (5/4, 11 AM – noon). More information is available at www.gis.penndot.gov/ltap.

Adjournment

Mr. Cotter stated that the next Technical Committee meeting will be held during the next Joint Technical and Coordinating Committee meeting on February 15, 2023 at 9 AM. Ms. Heller made a motion to adjourn, and the meeting was adjourned.