



Lehigh Valley Transportation Study

LAMONT G. MCCLURE, JR.
Chair, Coordinating Committee

BRENDAN COTTER
Chair, Technical Committee

BECKY A. BRADLEY, AICP
Secretary,
Coordinating Committee +
Technical Committee

Lehigh Valley Transportation Study Minutes from the Wednesday, June 21, 2023 Joint Technical and Coordinating Committee Meeting

Prior to the call 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. Lamont McClure chaired the Coordinating Committee portion of the meeting, and Mr. Cotter chaired the Technical Committee portion of the agenda.

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

Ms. Milagio took Roll Call.

Attendees:

Technical Committee

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

LVTS Coordinating Committee

Lamont McClure	Northampton County
Becky Bradley, AICP	LVPC
David Petrik	City of Allentown
Michael Alkhal (Alt)	City of Bethlehem
David Hopkins (Alt)	City of Easton
Owen O'Neill	LANTA
Brian Hare	PennDOT Central Office
Jim Mosca (Alt)	PennDOT Central Office

Members Absent: Ryan Meyer, Matthew Tuerk, Mark Hartney, William Reynolds, Salvatore Panto, Christopher Kufro, Phillips Armstrong, Rick Molchany, Thomas Stoudt

Staff Present: Matt Assad, Becky Bradley, Jahi Heath, Brian Hite, Max Kauthen, Hannah Milagio, Patrick Osei

Public Present: Rich Ames, Vanessa Shamberg, Michael Drabenstott, Craig Beavers, Scott Slingerland, Max Inkrote, Ralph Eberhardt, Amy Cozze, Evan Jones, Bryan Cope, Michael Emili, Liz Rosencrans, Brooks Comer, Scott Vottero, Jeff Rai

Courtesy of the Floor

Mr. McClure asked if there were any comments or questions from the public about items not on the agenda, and there were none.

Mr. McClure introduced Mr. Heath and Mr. Kauthen as the new LVPC interns. Mr. Heath and Mr. Kauthen spoke briefly of their backgrounds, and Mr. McClure noted that it was exciting to have two young people interested in pursuing planning as a career.

Minutes

Mr. Cotter stated that the last Technical Committee was held on May 17, 2023. Ms. Milagio noted the actions voted on.

- Minutes for the April 19, 2023, meeting
- Recommendation for TIP Amendment: Riverside Drive
- Adjournment

Mr. Cotter asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the Technical Committee Meeting on May 17, 2023. Mr. Alas made the motion for approval of the Technical Committee Meeting minutes, and the motion was seconded by Ms. Ruth. Mr. Cotter asked for any questions or comments from the members and the public, and there were none. Mr. Cotter asked Ms. Bradley to call for a vote and the motion carried.

Mr. McClure moved on to the approval of the minutes from the joint Technical and Coordinating Committee meeting on April 19, 2023. Ms. Milagio noted the actions voted on.

- Minutes for the February 15, 2023, meeting
- Performance Measures PM-2 Target Setting
- Performance Measures PM-3 Target Setting
- Adjournment

Mr. McClure asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the Coordinating Committee Meeting on April 19, 2023. Mr. O'Neil made the motion for approval of the Technical Committee Meeting minutes, seconded by Mr. Hare. Mr. McClure asked for any questions or comments from the members and the public. Hearing none, Mr. McClure asked Ms. Bradley to call for a vote and the motion carried.

Old Business

PRESENTATION ITEM: PennDOT District 5-0 Bridge Projects Status Report

Mr. McClure highlighted the PennDOT District 5 Bridge Projects Status Report on page 25 in the meeting packet. Mr. Vottero briefly reviewed the projects, including:

- State Route 145 over Jordan Creek Bridge Replacement (City of Allentown and Whitehall Township, Lehigh County)
- State Route 329 over the Lehigh River – Cementon Bridge (Northampton Borough, Northampton County; Whitehall Township, Lehigh County)
- State Route 378 Hill to Hill Bridge Rehabilitation over the Lehigh River (City of Bethlehem, Lehigh and Northampton Counties)
- State Route 611 (N Delaware Dr) over the Oughoughton Creek (Washington Township, Northampton County)
- State Route 873 over the Lehigh River – Gap Bridge Repairs (Washington Township, Lehigh County and Lehigh Township, Northampton County)
- State Route 1015 (Lower South Main St) over Martins Creek (Washington Township, Northampton County)
- State Route 1029 (Fifth St) Bridge Replacement (Whitehall Township, Lehigh County)
- State Route 2006 (Raubsville Rd) over Freys Run (Williams Township, Northampton County)
- State Route 2025 (Powder Valley Rd) over Indian Creek (Upper Milford Township, Lehigh County)
- State Route 2027 (Hecktown Rd) Bridge over Route 22 (Bethlehem Township, Northampton County)
- State Route 2029 (Farmersville Rd) Bridge over Route 22 (Bethlehem Township, Northampton County)

- State Route 3017 (Howertown Rd) Bridge (Allen Township, Northampton County)
- State Route 3018 (Old Carriage Rd) Bridge Replacement over Catasauqua Creek (East Allen Township, Northampton County)
- State Route 3020 (Newburg Rd) over Tributary of the Monocacy Creek (Lower and Upper Nazareth Townships, Northampton County)
- State Route 4003 (Kernsville Rd) Bridge over the Jordan Creek (North Whitehall Township, Lehigh County)
- State Route 7210 (Meadows Rd) Bridge (Lower Saucon Township, Northampton County)
- State Route 7408 (South Walnut St) Bridge over Trout Creek (Slatington Borough, Lehigh County)

Mr. McClure asked for any questions or comments from the members and the public, and there were none.

INFORMATION ITEM: PennDOT Transportation Improvement Program Administrative Actions

Ms. Ruth noted that, from April 8 to June 9, there were two statewide actions, one interstate administrative action, and 14 PennDOT District 5 administrative actions. Mr. McClure asked if there were any questions on the report from committee members or the public, and there were none.

ACTION ITEM: TIP Amendment #1 – Riverside Drive RAISE Grant

Mr. Osei noted that the Riverside Drive project is funded by the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant that was awarded to the project in the amount of \$21,158,854. It is a 3-mile project that will create a robust, multimodal commuting, emergency management, and equitable access corridor stretching from the City of Allentown through Whitehall Township in Pennsylvania. This project converts an abandoned railroad bed along the west side of the Lehigh River in Whitehall Township and the City of Allentown, Lehigh County, from just Lehigh Avenue to Furnace Street to a complete two-lane street with an adjacent multi-use path. The multi-use path will continue north to connect to the existing Delaware and Lehigh (D&L) Trail just north of race street. The expected completion will be in 2029. This is a project that will serve an equity community with new modern multi-modal infrastructure for better access to and from the community.

The Riverside Drive project is an alternative transportation corridor that will help reduce vehicular emissions, greenhouse gas emissions, and energy consumption as a strategic congestion mitigation investment by connecting existing transit routes, sidewalks, trails, bikeways, and roadways and enhancing emergency response to areas of Route 22 our highest traveled highway segment in the Lehigh Valley.

Requirements to amend the Transportation Improvement Program to add a project include, travel demand modeling, which was completed and a draft air quality conformity report for the Lehigh Valley MPO, was forwarded to the required Interagency Coordination Group. This includes: the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, US Environmental Protection Agency and PENNDOT. They review for conformance with various state and federal statutes. It is of note that the conformity emission analysis now utilizes EPA's latest MOVES3.1 emission model, as it is now required as of January 2023.

Ms. Milagio stated that the 30-day public review and comment period was open April 19 – May 19. Draft Amendment documents for the Riverside Drive project are available at the public libraries of Allentown, Bethlehem, and Easton, as well as the offices of PennDOT District 5, LANTA, and the LVPC. It is also available digitally at the LVPC website. Comments could be made on the LVPC website, in an email to planning@lvpc.org, over the phone at 610-264-4544, or at one of the three public meetings held during the 30-day period. Two in-person meetings were held, one during the Whitehall Township Board of Commissioners meeting on May 8 at 7 PM, and another at the training room at Bucky Boyle Park in Allentown on May 11 at 7 PM. There was also a third public meeting during the LVTS Technical

Committee on May 17th at 9 AM. Comments received during the public comment period were prepared and responded to in preparation for this meeting, and they are included in the meeting packet.

Ms. Ruth noted that the addition of Riverside Drive to the TIP is required by the US Department of Transportation to reflect the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant in the amount of \$35,264,756 for the Riverside Drive project, which is in the City of Allentown and Whitehall Township. This project is funded by a US Department of Transportation Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant in the amount of \$21,158,854 with \$14,105,902 local match per the grant agreement for a total of \$35,264,756.

Mr. McClure asked about the source of the local match for the RAISE Grant (\$14,105,902). Ms. Ruth noted that the local match was a right-of-way contribution. Mr. McClure asked for confirmation that the local match was not money coming off the regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Ms. Ruth confirmed that this was true. Mr. McClure asked for confirmation that the project is required to be added to the TIP to access the funds. Ms. Bradley confirmed that this was true. Mr. McClure asked if it was expected that TIP funds would be used to fund the project. Ms. Bradley said it was not expected with the scope of the project as it stands now.

Mr. McClure asked for a motion to add the Riverside Drive RAISE Grant Project to the Transportation Improvement Program, as forwarded by the Technical Committee. Mr. O'Neil moved to add the Riverside Drive project to the TIP, and the motion was seconded by Ms. Bradley. Mr. McClure asked if there were any questions or comments from members of the public, and there were none. Ms. Bradley called for the vote, and the motion carried.

ACTION ITEM: TIP Amendment #2 – Hugh Moore Park Bridge Painting and Repairs

Ms. Ruth noted that the second TIP Amendment is for the Hugh Moore Park Bridge Painting and Repairs. This addition to the TIP will allow the project in the City of Easton to move forward with obtaining clearances needed for construction. This project was initially programmed out to the mid-range of the 2019 Long-Range Transportation Plan, but recent deterioration has escalated the need. The letting of this project is currently anticipated for January 9, 2025.

Ms. Ruth added that the total allocation from regional transportation improvement program is \$2,326,903 from the Construction Phase of Country Club Road over US 22 (\$1,246,160) as funding for this project has been obligated on the 2021 TIP. The remaining allocation is from the LVTS Highway and Bridge Reserve Line Item (\$1,330,743) with a \$900,000 contribution from the City of Easton. The total project cost is \$3,226,903. This project received approval from the Center for Program Development and Management (CPDM) on June 7.

Mr. Cotter asked if there were any questions or comments on the Hugh Moore Park Bridge Painting and Repairs project from members or the public, and there were none. Mr. Cotter asked for a motion to recommend to the Coordinating Committee that the Hugh Moore Park Bridge Painting and Repairs project be added to the TIP. Mr. Hopkins moved to recommend the Hugh Moore Park project to the Coordinating Committee for consideration on the TIP, and the motion was seconded by Mr. Alas. Ms. Bradley called for the vote and the motion carried.

Mr. McClure asked for a motion to add the Hugh Moore Park Bridge Painting and Repairs project to the TIP, as forwarded by the Technical Committee. Mr. O'Neil made the motion, and it was seconded by Ms. Bradley. Mr. McClure asked if there were any questions or comments from the members or the public, and there were none. Ms. Bradley called for a vote and the motion carried.

ACTION ITEM: TIP Amendment #3 – Two Rivers Trail Gap 9A - South

Ms. Ruth noted that the third TIP Amendment is for the Two Rivers Trail Gap 9A – South. This project was funded in the amount of \$654,036 to Northampton County through the regional allocation of

Transportation Alternatives Set Aside dollars in 2021. The original scope included the construction of one mile of trail. Since the project award, permitting and partnership have resulted in significant project cost savings. Northampton County has requested a change in scope for this project to double the total mileage to be constructed, extending the southern portion of the trail from Filetown Road to PA State Route 191 in Plainfield Township. The funding source for the project is the LVTS allocation of Transportation Alternative Set-Aside dollars. No change in funding is proposed, only change in project scope. This project is pending approval by the Program Management Committee (PMC) at the July 13 meeting.

Mr. Cotter asked if there were any questions or comments on the Two Rivers Trail Gap 9A - South project from members or the public, and there were none. Mr. Cotter asked for a motion to recommend to the Coordinating Committee that the Two Rivers Trail Gap 9A - South project be added to the TIP. Ms. Bradley made the motion to recommend the Two Rivers Trail Gap 9A – South to the Coordinating Committee, and Ms. Heller seconded the motion. Ms. Bradley called for a vote and the motion passed.

Mr. McClure asked for a motion to add the Two Rivers Trail Gap 9A - South project to the TIP, as forwarded by the Technical Committee. Mr. O'Neil made the motion, and it was seconded by Ms. Bradley. Mr. McClure asked if there were any questions or comments from the members or the public, and there were none. Ms. Bradley called for a vote and the motion carried.

ACTION ITEM: TIP Amendment #4 – Newburg Road over Tributary of the Monocacy Creek

Ms. Ruth stated that the fourth TIP amendment is for Newburg Road over a Tributary to the Monocacy Creek. This increase for the construction phase of this project, located in Lower Nazareth Township, is attributed to substruction piles and grouting, utilizing accelerated bridge construction, inflation, and addition incorporated utility costs. The funding sources for the project are the construction phase dollars from Mill Road over the tributary to the Saucon Creek (\$986,900) as the project was fully funded off the 2021 Transportation Improvement Program. Funding was also moved from the construction phase of Maple Drive over the tributary to Bertsch Creek (\$128,610) due to low bid savings. The final source is the LVTS Highway & Bridge Line Item (\$1,673,490) for a total project amendment of \$2,789,000. This project is pending approval by the Program Management Committee (PMC) at the July 13 meeting.

Mr. Cotter asked if there were any questions or comments on the Newburg Road over Tributary of the Monocacy Creek project from members or the public, and there were none. Mr. Cotter asked for a motion to recommend to the Coordinating Committee that the Newburg Road over Tributary of the Monocacy Creek project be added to the TIP. Mr. Hopkins moved to recommend the Newburg Road over Tributary of the Monocacy Creek project to the Coordinating Committee for consideration on the TIP, and the motion was seconded by Mr. Alas. Ms. Bradley called for the vote and the motion carried.

Mr. McClure asked for a motion to add the Newburg Road over Tributary of the Monocacy Creek project to the TIP, as forwarded by the Technical Committee. Mr. O'Neil made the motion, and it was seconded by Mr. Hare. Mr. McClure asked if there were any questions or comments from the members or the public, and there were none. Ms. Bradley called for a vote and the motion carried.

INFORMATION ITEM: Long-Range Transportation Plan Update

Mr. Osei shared that, on June 16, LVTS kicked off the first workshop for updating the Long-Range Transportation Plan. During the workshop, participants engaged in discussions surrounding the data analytical tool used for project evaluation. The agenda included various topics such as Transportation Needs Assessments, a comprehensive review of survey results, policy evaluation, an overview of existing conditions, proposed changes, and budget considerations. The participants also delved into the total budget and allocation of resources into different categories. This workshop served as an important step in the process of updating the Long-Range Transportation Plan, ensuring that transportation needs and priorities are effectively addressed in the Lehigh Valley area.

There are two upcoming workshops for the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The first will take place on Friday, June 23rd from 8:30 AM to 12:30 PM at the LVPC (Lehigh Valley Planning Commission). This workshop will focus on project selection discussions. The second workshop will be held on Friday, June 30th from 8:30 AM to 12:30 PM at the LVPC, where the aim is to finalize project selection and address any necessary policy considerations. These workshops provide valuable opportunities for collaboration and decision-making as part of the LRTP update process.

Mr. McClure asked if there were any questions or comments from members of the public, and there were none.

INFORMATION ITEM: Lehigh Valley Passenger Rail Study Project Update

Mr. Osei noted that, at last month's Technical Committee meeting, the consultants for the Lehigh Valley Passenger Rail Analysis provided a project update. The meeting discussed the Lehigh Valley Passenger Rail Analysis, which is a feasibility study to determine the viability of implementing passenger rail in the region. The study aims to assess the infrastructure, costs, and potential alignments for passenger rail. It is the initial step in a series of analyses and would require further studies and coordination with rail operators. The presentation emphasized that the study does not advocate for a specific alignment but rather examines various concepts for future analysis. The scope of work includes evaluating the feasibility of passenger rail in the Lehigh Valley, assessing rail infrastructure, and identifying likely project development pathways. The study outcomes will provide a list of rail infrastructure corridors, capital and operating cost estimates, potential funding sources, and a summary report with potential next steps. The project schedule is expected to conclude in October 2023. Questions and comments from participants addressed the impacts of passenger rail on housing, land use, affordable housing, and regional development. The study does not include ridership analysis but will be followed by an alternatives analysis phase to further assess ridership demand. The feasibility study is an essential step in the federal process for implementing passenger rail, and the decision to proceed with the project would involve collective agreement between LVTS and PennDOT.

Mr. Cotter asked if there were any questions or comments on the project update. Mr. McClure asked how the LVTS would factor in the possibility of passenger rail coming into the region when considering how to plan for long-range transportation funding in the LRTP. Ms. Bradley said that the LRTP is updated every four years, and this study should be available by the end of the year. At this point, writing policy towards that potential service is the way to prepare. Right now, there is no hard project to fund, money cannot be allocated. Funding resources are also not available currently, as the process to procure federal funds for passenger rail is available by application for construction and other phases. The best strategy at this point is to write policy about passenger rail into the LRTP. Mr. McClure noted that federal funding may not be enough to fund passenger rail in the region, and asked if the LVTS would potentially be tapped as a funding source for passenger rail. Ms. Bradley responded that the state legislature would be the first source of additional funding because they would need to secure the revenue guarantee. This feasibility study is the first of many studies required to implement a passenger rail project, and the state legislature would come first before LVTS would get involved.

Mr. Cotter asked if there were any additional questions or comments, and there were none.

INFORMATION ITEM: Eastern PA Freight Alliance Freight Infrastructure Plan

Mr. Hite noted that the Draft Freight Profile from the project consultants was included in the meeting packet, and that the consultants were collecting feedback on the draft from the partner Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). Mr. Hite showed the study area map, which illustrates how highways and freight movements extend across borders in our region. Ten counties in the area are interconnected by major interstate highways such as 78, 80, 81, 84, 176, 380, as well as the PA Turnpike Interstates 76 and 476. These interstates play a crucial role in connecting the entire region. Additionally, there are prominent

arterial roads in the Lehigh Valley, including routes 22, 33, and 309, along with several other three-digit state routes that contribute to the transportation network.

Mr. Hite showed a slide that compared industrial supply in terms of building square footage for freight between 2012 and 2022. In Northampton County, there has been a significant increase from 36,950,000 square feet in 2012 to 66,070,000 square feet in 2022. This represents a remarkable growth of 78.80% in the square footage of these types of buildings. Similarly, Lehigh County has experienced a 29.92% increase, going from 62,890,000 square feet to 81,710,000 square feet. The entire study area began with a total of 269,460,000 square feet of industrial buildings in 2012. Over the course of a decade, it has expanded to reach 372,860,000 square feet, an over 100,000,000 square foot increase reflecting a remarkable growth rate of 38.38%.

This growth has been observed across all the partner counties, and further expansion in the future is expected, showing the need for this infrastructure plan. Lehigh County is first in square footage and Northampton County is third. The state's industrial supply grew 11.87% overall from 2012, while the study area grew by 38% in the same timeframe.

Mr. Hite showed a map that displayed freight infrastructure and freight generators in the study region. Within the Lehigh Valley, areas including Upper and Lower Macungie, and the northern corridor of Route 33, including Route 329 leading to the airport area, as top freight generators. Additionally, the former Bethlehem steel location along Route 412 is also represented as a freight generator on the map.

The next map displayed the 2022 Average Annual Daily Truck Traffic in thousands. The Lehigh Valley inset showed that Interstate 78 carries the highest amount of truck traffic in our region, carrying nearly 12,500 trucks per day throughout its length in Lehigh and Northampton counties. It is important to note that Interstate 78 is also an alternative fuels corridor, and this data will help to update the Long-Range Transportation Plan and the Congestion Management Process.

Mr. Hite showed a slide that highlighted bottlenecks in the study area. He noted that the consultant identified that Lehigh County has a higher level of congestion compared to other areas in the study region. The data presented was a high-level overview of the extensive data being utilized for the Freight Infrastructure plan. Study partners are figuring out more engagements to discuss policy as a group to initialize this planning process into a living process to improve freight mobility. He encouraged the committees to provide the staff with their feedback on this initial information.

Mr. McClure asked if the study is analyzing the land that is potentially available for industrial expansion in each of the partner counties. Ms. Bradley stated that the initial intent was to do so, but not all the county partners have that information available in the way that Lehigh and Northampton counties do. The consultant will have it for the counties that can provide it, but not for the entire study area. This delay in data collection has also impacted the project schedule. Mr. McClure noted that it is important that the counties that did have the data will get that analysis as part of the overall study because this will be important data for future discussions and planning work.

Mr. McClure noted that Lehigh County has severe congestion that spills over into, and is partly caused by freight traffic from, Northampton County. He asked what LVTS, and the counties could do to support municipalities, in addition to the work that is already happening or has been done, to reduce this congestion over time. Ms. Bradley stated that, once the Freight Infrastructure Plan is finalized, LVTS could reclassify the roadways. This will allow the state and the federal government to open new sources of funding and planning tools. She anticipates that this will be a recommendation that comes out of the plan both for the Lehigh Valley and the Wilkes Barre/Scranton area. Lehigh County is also pursuing a freight-based land use management guide, like the guide that Northampton County released in 2022. She wanted to alert meet participants that Northampton County's guide is currently paying off with local government partners. The next LVPC meeting will see another zoning amendment by a local government

to better manage its industrial land use, and the LVPC is generally seeing one amendment a month since the guide's release. Ms. Bradley also noted that another option for supporting congestion mitigation is Intelligent Transportation corridors that use technology to learn traffic patterns to allow for better and safer traffic flows. She stated that the regions are working together to determine how information will be from the communities will be gathered for the plan, and that a series of in-person and virtual meetings will be held to collect information from partners in the freight industry, local government, and the public. More information on these meetings will be available shortly.

Mr. McClure asked if there were any more questions or comments. Mr. O'Neil asked if decisions made by the developers considered the regional labor market's capacity, or if the decision made based on long-term projections that future uses will rely on automation. Ms. Bradley noted that this is a freight infrastructure plan, and the labor market will not be considered because the plan will follow guidance for transportation planning. She said that the Lehigh Valley is one of the only regions that focuses on the transportation and land use connection in a real way, and that the LVTS should be proud of this focus. This plan will give us information on freight movements including where freight is and is not going, how traffic patterns have changed, and what can be done about it. She noted that Mr. O'Neil's and Mr. Cotter's input during those community meetings will be important because getting people to the jobs in the freight generators is a very important component that can be tied in with the infrastructure analysis because of all the work done with LANTA and the LVTS.

Mr. McClure asked if there was any appetite from any of the partner organizations to look at industrial land use in the future. Ms. Bradley hopes that is the case; some partners have expressed interest, while others see industrial development only in a positive light. She is hopeful that, when the plan is finalized, those partners will better understand the challenges that come with industrial growth.

INFORMATION ITEM: Monthly Traffic Report

Mr. Hite shared that the continuous counter on Route 33 south of Route 248 has been deactivated to enable paving in that area, and that it is anticipated to be reinstalled by the end of the summer. He stated that, in the month of May, Route 22 between Airport Road and the Lehigh River Bridge recorded 105,227 total vehicles. Interstate 78 near Route 309 72,608 vehicles, and Route 309 near Coopersburg in Lehigh County registered 40,008 vehicles to close out the month. Mr. Hite also noted that two traffic counters collected classification data and showed that there were 20,015 trucks on Interstate 78 near 309 and 13,250 trucks on Route 22 in May. Mr. McClure asked if there were any questions or comments about the traffic report from the members or the public, and there were none.

New Business

INFORMATION/ACTION ITEM: 2020 Census Urbanized Boundary 'Smoothing' Update

Mr. Osei provided an update on the 2020 census Urbanized boundary and smoothing. The Census Bureau considers "Urban Area" to be a comprehensive term incorporating both Urbanized Areas (UAs) and Urban Clusters (UCs). The US Department of Transportation permits adjustments to the Urbanized Area boundary based on specific regulations. Urbanized Areas are statistical geographic entities defined by the Census Bureau, characterized by densely settled territories with a minimum population of 50,000 and a population density of at least 1,000 people per square mile. Within the realm of transportation planning, these areas are commonly referred to as Urbanized Areas (UZAs).

Mr. Osei highlighted differences between the 2010 and 2020 Census Urban Area criterium. Changes include the use of land cover data to identify areas with a high degree of impervious land cover, adjustments in population thresholds for qualifying urban areas, the removal of the distinction between "urbanized areas" and "urban clusters," and the inclusion of group quarters blocks and noncontiguous territories based on specific density and distance criteria. The criteria also consider the inclusion of nonresidential urban territories and the exclusion of low-density blocks, bodies of water, and wetlands. These updates aim to enhance the accuracy and consistency of defining urban areas in the census data.

Mr. Osei stated that there was a change in the name and population of the urban area from the 2010 to the 2020 Census. In 2010, the urban area was named "Allentown—PA—NJ" and had a total population of 821,173, with 664,651 people residing in the urban area, accounting for 81% of the total population. The land area for this urban area was 350 square miles. However, in 2020, the urban area name changed to "Allentown—Bethlehem, PA—NJ," with a slightly increased total population of 861,889. The urban area population, however, decreased to 621,703, representing 72% of the total population. The land area also decreased to 261.5 square miles. These changes indicate a 5% increase in total population, but a significant decrease of 6% in the urban area population and a notable reduction of 25% in the land area.

Mr. Osei showed a map that displayed the 2010 and 2020 Census Urban Areas. In 2010, the urbanized area encompassed a land area of 350 square miles. However, due to the new criteria implemented in 2020, which set a minimum threshold of 2,000 housing units or 5,000 people, we witnessed a noticeable decrease in the land area. The urbanized area in 2020 shrank to 261.5 square miles, representing a substantial decline of approximately 25%. These changes in land use area have far-reaching implications for urban planning, resource allocation, and understanding the spatial dynamics and growth patterns of the urban area over time. It underscores the dynamic nature of urban environments and the need for adaptability in urban planning strategies.

Mr. Osei noted that the determination of urban area boundaries is a crucial aspect of urban planning and transportation management. The primary objective is to establish fixed boundaries that contribute to the smooth functioning of the urban area. These boundaries play a significant role in maintaining administrative continuity, encompassing areas of importance such as residential, commercial, industrial, and national defense zones, and smoothing out irregularities. The determination of urban area boundaries in the Lehigh Valley involved considering factors such as the FutureLV land use plan, future transportation projects, and the preservation buffer. This comprehensive approach aimed to support sustainable growth, enhance transportation connectivity, and preserve important natural resources.

Mr. Osei stated that future transportation project locations were also considered during the boundary determination process. This involved analyzing proposed infrastructure projects like road expansions, transit systems, and bike lanes. By incorporating these future transportation developments into the boundary definition, the aim was to create a well-connected urban area that meets the transportation needs of the growing population. The inclusion of a preservation buffer within the boundaries was another important aspect. This buffer zone helps protect environmentally sensitive areas and maintain a balance between development and conservation efforts.

Mr. Osei noted that the next step in the process of urban area smoothing involves seeking approval from the technical and coordinating committees. It is important to note that the submission deadline to PennDOT is June 30th, 2023. Once submitted, PennDOT will review the proposal and forward it to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for their final approval.

Mr. Cotter asked if there were any questions or comments from members of the public, and there were none. Mr. Cotter asked for a motion to recommend the Proposed Urban Area Smoothing Map to the Coordinating Committee. Ms. Bradley made a motion to recommend the Proposed Urban Area Smoothing Map to the Coordinating Committee, which was seconded by Ms. Heller. Ms. Bradley called for the vote and the motion carried.

Mr. McClure asked for a motion to approve the Proposed Urban Smoothing Map as recommended by the Technical Committee. Mr. O'Neil asked if this process is just for FHWA and PennDOT purposes or will

this change what the census bureau defines as the urbanized area for the purpose of all federal programs. Ms. Bradley stated that this would impact other federal programs, including the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Mr. O'Neil explained to meeting participants that FTA formula funding programs are partially based on urbanized areas, and it could affect LANTA's funding. Ms. Bradley added that the proposed additions to the map, based on *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*, were added to the map because they align with where development exists or could exist. Mr. McClure asked if there would be funding implications if LVTS would not approve the map. Ms. Bradley said there would be because the initial map from the census did not capture all the areas that should be included as developed or potentially developed areas. Mr. McClure asked for clarification on the term "developed" within this context. Ms. Bradley noted that "developed" relates to the designated "developed" and "preservation buffer" areas in *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*, as well as data sets that have come up since then. This map does not encourage development, but rather notes where development exists or is expected. Mr. McClure asked for confirmation that everything on the urban smoothing map was identified in *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*. Ms. Bradley confirmed that the map mirrors the adopted General Land Use Plan in *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*.

Mr. McClure asked for a motion to approve the Proposed Urban Smoothing Map. Mr. O'Neil made the motion, and it was seconded by Ms. Bradley. Ms. Bradley called for the vote and the motion carried.

INFORMATION ITEM: Public Engagement, Grants and Education

Mr. Assad stated that PennDOT has recently opened its next application cycle for grants of \$50,000 to \$1.5 million for Transportation Alternative Set-Aside (TASA) projects. Municipalities and organizations with projects that promote walking, rolling, biking and transportation alternative education programs for children, can now apply for grants from a state fund of at least \$28 million. Projects can range from sidewalk improvements to traffic calming to pedestrian safety to bicycle lanes to education programs for children K-12. The deadline for the draft application is July 17. More info is available on PennDOT's website

<https://www.pennDOT.pa.gov/ProjectAndPrograms/Planning/Pages/Transportation%20Alternatives%20Set-Aside%20-%20Surface%20Trans.%20Block%20Grant%20Program.aspx>.

The Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development also has a Multimodal Transportation Fund that provides grants of \$100,000 to \$3 million to municipal governments, businesses, or transportation agencies. The money is for development, rehabilitation, and enhancement of transportation assets to existing communities, streetscape, lighting, sidewalk enhancement, pedestrian safety, connectivity of transportation assets and transit-oriented development. Applicants must provide a 30% match and applications are due by July 31. More information and applications are available at DCED's Multimodal Fund page <https://dced.pa.gov/programs/multimodal-transportation-fund/>.

Mr. Assad noted that the most recent Business Cycle Column published Sunday, June 9, in the Sunday Morning Call. In the column with the headline "A Giant Leap Forward on Climate Action," Ms. Bradley spelled out the unprecedented opportunity the region has by pushing its way into the federal Environmental Protection Agency's Carbon Pollution Reduction Program, and getting approved for a \$1 million grant that is just a downpayment for years of funding and programming for a potentially long list of programs designed to not only reduce carbon emissions, but make the Lehigh Valley more resilient to the impacts of climate change. That column can be found at mcall.com and lvpc.org/news/v.

Mr. Assad shared that the most recent Plan Lehigh Valley radio show aired on June 5 on WDIY FM 88.1, and it focused on the Social and Monetary Benefits of protecting our environment. Joining Ms. Bradley and Mr. Assad was LVPC Master Planner and Engineer, Geoff Reese. They talked a lot about how that \$1 million climate reduction grant will kickstart a new push for climate action, but with Mr. Reese's help, we talk about some past LVPC studies and analysis that show just how much our environment means to our economy. That 30-minute show is now streaming at lvpc.org and wdiy.org.

Mr. Hite reminded meeting participants that Local Government Appreciation Day would be held on June 28 at Wayne A. Grube Memorial Park in Northampton County to recognize and honor all the local government employees and officials who have participated in the Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) and the Lehigh Valley Government Academy (LVGA). These public works and local government employees and officials work tirelessly to keep our region's infrastructure and resources going. They also attended the LTAP and LVGA courses to keep learning and making their communities better and more sustainable by learning the right way to do things and getting advice on localized infrastructure problems. The special guest speaker will be LTAP Safety consulting engineer Pat Wright, who has taught numerous classes at the LVPC over the years as well as many Tech Assists in the Lehigh Valley. Mr. Hite also thanked Northampton County for hosting the event at their park.

Mr. Hite reviewed upcoming virtual training opportunities. LTAP training includes June 27, Municipal Stormwater Facilities Programs, 8 AM – noon; August 3, The Safe System Approach, 11 AM – noon. PennDOT Connects training includes June 29, Bicycle Selection Guide Workshop, 8 AM – 10 AM; September 28, Active Transportation Workshop, 8 AM – noon. Mr. Hite reminded participants at the meeting that municipalities interested in holding classes or in need of LTAP technical assistance should contact him.

Adjournment

Mr. McClure stated that the next LVTS meeting would be an LRTP Workshop meeting on June 23 at 8:30 AM at the LVPC Office. The next Technical Committee meeting will be held on July 19, 2023, at 9 AM, and the next Joint Technical and Coordinating Committee meeting will be held August 16, 2023, at 9 AM. Mr. O'Neil made a motion to adjourn, and the meeting was adjourned.