

**Northern Tier Regional Transportation Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes**

Date: Monday, December 12, 2022
10 AM – 11 AM
NTRPDC Conference Room
Towanda, PA

Attendees: Brian Baker, Northern Tier
Brett Voloshin, Northern Tier
Tracy Eisenbury, BeST
Dean Roberts, PennDOT Central Office
Marc Rice, Tioga County
Chuck Dillon, Senator Cris Dush
Rick Biery, Bradford County
Kaye Aumick, Tioga County
Matt Wise, Senator Jean Yaw
Mark Hamilton, Tioga County Commissioner
Justin Batiuk, PennDOT District 3.0
Michael Gismondi, PennDOT Central Office
Alan Quimby, Tioga County
Chris King, PennDOT District 4.0
Marie Bishop, PennDOT District 4.0
Todd Wright, BeST
Gerald Wertz,
Emma Pugh, PennDOT District 4.0
John Petrini, PennDOT District 4.0
Brian Hoffman, Sullivan County
Bob Getz, Sullivan County
Jack Conroy, Susquehanna County
Thomas Henry, Wyoming County Commissioner
Steve Fisher, PennDOT District 4.0
Lynelle Farber, Wyoming County
Jugan Jugan, Sullivan County
Alan Hall, Susquehanna County
Jean Ruhf, Endless Mountains Visitors Bureau
Alexander Allen, Representative Fritz

I. Items For Discussion

A. Approve October 3, 2022 meeting minutes

Brian Baker asked if there were any questions regarding the October meeting minutes. Hearing none, a motion was made by Bob Getz to approve the previous meeting minutes, seconded by Jean Ruth, and the motion carried unanimously.

B. 2023 – 2026 TIP Administrative Actions & Amendments

District 3.0 – Admin Actions & Amendments

Admin Actions

Justin Batiuk explains that there were two amendments for District 3.0 that were already shared via email and approved by the committee. The additional actions listed for the

committee are admin actions for the TIP roll over year where phases are being added to or removed from projects based on the project's progression, if additional funding is required, or if funds need to be allocated to other projects. Jugan asks Batiuk where District 3.0 stands on the refund for Cherry Township for the bridge that was completed around two years ago. Batiuk offers to follow up with Erin Chris, he further explains that there may have been communication issues between District 3.0 and Cherry township. Batiuk believes that District 3.0 has received the final cost of the bridge which they need for the reimbursement. Justin reiterates that he will reach out to Erin, and Baker offers to email the information to Jugan since he has Jugan's new email address.

Amendments

No amendments for District 3.0 were discussed during the meeting.

District 4.0 – Admin Actions & Amendments

Admin Actions

Steve Fisher explains that District 4.0 is undergoing the same process as District 3.0 in regards to the TIP. He expresses that there are not too many significant changes being made at this time. Fisher specifically wants to mention that two sections of Route 6 are going to be federally obligated this year. One section, near SR 87 through almost to the Fairgrounds, will be paved and the contract should be let this year. Baker asks if there are any questions for District 4.0. Alan Hall asks about the TAP reserve, however due to technical issues the question was not recorded. Hall asks about project 73298 to make sure the shoulders are being put in. Steve assures Hall that the funds were already committed to the program. Baker asks if the Route 29 project is still on schedule for next year. Fisher explains the project is already let and should start in the spring season.

Amendments

Steve Fisher explains that due to the IIA bill, District 4.0 has received a different funding source called BRIP, which is used for any bridge structure 20 feet and greater. District 4.0 wants to utilize this funding for a bridge structure on SR 706. Brian asks if there are any questions regarding the amendment, and comments that the amendment has already been approved via email ballot between RTAC meetings.

C. Safety Performance Measures

Baker describes that he received a letter from PennDOT Central office regarding the statewide and Northern Tier RPO safety performance measures targets. Baker explains that PennDOT sets the targets that the Northern Tier RPO can adopt or Northern Tier RPO can develop their own targets that would need to be approved by both Central office and FHWA. At the Fall Planning Partners Meeting, Baker and Voloshin learned that most other RPOs and MPOs will use the targets set by Central office as well. Baker expresses that this decision to use the Central office targets must be approved by the committee. A motion was made by Alan Hall, seconded by Jugan, the motion was passed unanimously. Bob Getz asked if the safety performance measures materially do any good. Baker comments that the state didn't meet the targets set during the last TIP document. He mentions a letter was sent with the performance measures that explains the process to calculate the targets.

D. Green-Light-Go Program

Baker moves on to explain the Green Light Go program in more detail as he has sent out an email with information on the project around a month ago. Eligible applicants for the program are MPOs/RPOs and municipalities, and eligible projects for the program are LED replacements,

traffic signal retiming, studies, monitoring, innovative technologies, communications back to traffic management center, detection/controller upgrades, modernization upgrades, and intelligent transportation system applications. New traffic signals, routine maintenance, emergency preemption, battery backup, and flashing warning devices are all not eligible projects for this program. Baker encourages the committee to share the program information with anyone who may be interested in utilizing the program. The program requires a 20% match and lists the available fund sources that municipalities or MPOs/RPOs can use for the match. Applicants can submit for reimbursement if awarded money through the program. Baker asks for any questions regarding the program at this time. Alan Hall comments that this program may not be as helpful to rural Pennsylvanians, and Getz mentions the fact that there is only one traffic light in Sullivan County.

E. Annual Obligated Report

Baker explains the Annual Obligated report is produced by MPOs/RPOs annually and documents the federally obligated and de-obligated projects on the TIP that year. Northern Tier's document is missing some data and maps but is mostly finished otherwise. After the document is completed, it will be shared with Federal Highway and Federal Transit before being officially posted on the Northern Tier website by the end of December. Baker offers to take questions once the document is completed and is shared with the committee.

F. Local Bridge Subcommittee

Baker summarized how the local bridge subcommittee voted on the criteria to rank bridges using a website called Decision Lens. They voted on the importance of the criteria when considering bridges to be added to the TIP document. The highest ranked criteria were the impact the bridge has on EMS services within the region. Baker summarizes the list of criteria that the subcommittee voted on for the committee. Another meeting will be scheduled for early 2023 to compile all the bridge data and move forward with next steps. Baker continues to describe how Amy Kessler from North Central joined the subcommittee meeting to give a presentation on their process of ranking local bridges. Steve Herman from SEDA-COG also joined the meeting to describe their system of ranking local bridges. Baker asks for any questions regarding the meeting at this time.

G. 2023 RTAC Meeting Dates

Baker offers a list of RTAC meeting dates for the 2023 year. He did his best to pick dates that did not fall on any state or federal holiday. Baker mentions that there was discussion of reducing the number of meetings from six to four, but he was unsure if any decisions were made. Baker asks if anyone on the committee knows of any contradictions with the dates provided. In addition, if there are a lack of topics to discuss for the August RTAC meeting that meeting may be canceled. Fisher comments that the October meeting date may conflict with the Fall Planning Partners convention.

H. Supplemental Funding Update: Marsh Creek, Tunkhannock Mobility

Lynelle Farber provided an update on the Tunkhannock Mobility; however, due to technical issues the update was not recorded.

No members available on the meeting to provide an update for Marsh Creek.

I. LTAP

Baker begins by mentioning that there is a township within the region that has reached out to Northern Tier for setting up a LTAP class. Northern Tier is working closely with the township to develop a date and time for the class to be held. Later in the spring season, Baker and Voloshin will coordinate together to schedule and program multiple LTAP classes for the spring season. Baker comments that LTAP classes are transitioning to more in person classes over virtual classes.

Voloshin comments that Northern Tier plans to restart monthly email notifications to municipalities within the region for upcoming LTAP classes.

J. GIS Report

Voloshin comments that there are no new updates for GIS work done by Northern Tier. The Endless Mountains Gravel Bike-packing Loop project is currently working on marketing the bicycle loop, so there are not many GIS update that need to be made for the maps. Baker comments that Voloshin continues to assist Katie Smith, who now works in economic development, to develop maps needed for grants.

II. County & Agency Reports

A. Legislative Report

Chuck Dillon comments that Matt Wise is the new deputy director for Senator Jean Yaw's office. Senator Yaw inherited jurisdiction over Tioga County and lost Susquehanna County in the process. Matt Wise introduces himself to the committee and offers his services if they are needed at any point. Wise comments that Senator Yaw did keep the Wellsboro office after redistricting.

Alexander Allen from Representative Fritz's office comments that they now have all of Susquehanna County, but less of Wayne County after the redistricting.

Baker comments that Representative Tina Pickett has all of Wyoming County after the redistricting that occurred.

B. FHWA Report

No members present from FHWA to provide an update for the meeting.

C. PENNDOT Reports

1. Central Office

Dean Roberts describes that after the holidays, Central office will be ramping the financial guidance work group committees to prepare for the update of the 2025 program year. Roberts addresses that Central office has been receiving questions and requests regarding projects that will utilize funding from the new IIJA bill. Roberts clarifies that any federal projects being worked on right now is utilizing IIJA funding. The IIJA bill is the new federal bill, it is not an additional bill, so any previous or new federal programs are utilizing the funding from the IIJA bill. Hall asks Baker who is Dean Roberts. Baker explains that Roberts is Northern Tier's new liaison at PennDOT's Central office. He replaced Carey Mullins since Mullins was reassigned to a new position in District 8.0. Roberts explained that he has worked with Northern Tier in the past and has worked with Rick Biery during that time; however, he is unsure how long this change will last. Hall asks about the schedule of a project in Susquehanna County that will utilize federal funding. Fisher explains that he sat in on the Interstate steering committee meetings and their focus is still on that project as they discuss financing mechanisms so the projects can continue without the use of the highway's tolls. Hall expresses his concern that these projects were supposed to begin at the start of 2023. In addition, Hall expresses his concerns regarding the equipment Susquehanna County currently has, and goes into detail about the snow plows having holes in them. He asks Roberts if Susquehanna County can get an infusion of funding to replace the broken or damaged equipment the county has to work with. Roberts offers to reach out to the right individuals and pass the message along. Baker explains to Hall that Roberts works on the programming side of Central office and does not

work much with the maintenance side. Fisher comments that central office may be working on the formula to allocate maintenance funding to each county.

2. District 3.0

Batiuk comments that he has no updates for District 3.0 at the moment. He explains to Jugan that he was able to get in touch with Erin Chris, the project manager for the bridge mentioned earlier in the meeting. Chris is waiting for the proper documentation with the final cost of the bridge and any invoices or canceled checks from the township before PennDOT can proceed with issuing a refund to the township. Jugan offers to meet with the township after this meeting concludes to discuss and hopefully resolve the situation as quick as possible. Jugan asks where they stand on the bridge in Mildred. Batiuk asks to clarify which bridge is being discussed, and Jugan clarifies the bridge on 487 by Birch creek. Batiuk offers to look it up in their system. After a moment, he explains the bridge is going to be let in the summer of 2023 and the project is listed as “bridge replacement”. Batiuk explains the complexity of the project due to being located on a property being protected by the Stafford Act, which is the first instance of this issue occurring in Pennsylvania. Jugan asks about a status update on another bridge located in Dushore on Route 220, and how PennDOT will handle the traffic in the region. Batiuk is unsure how traffic will be directed during the project due to the possible lack of detour routes in the area. He offers to do some further research and reach out to Jugan at a later time. Getz comments that the project was pushed back in the past and that the bridge does not appear to be in good condition. Batiuk agrees and finds that the project has been pushed back to 2029 and there is no determination for traffic control on the project currently. He believes that a temp or one lane restriction would be used for this project, but he offers to do more research on the issue. Batiuk offers to help Jugan in the process of getting a refund for the local bridge project in Cherry Township. Jugan explains that Cherry Township currently has two secretaries at the moment which has caused some communication issues with the township.

3. District 4.0

Fisher explains that Hall previously asked for information regarding project 81511. The project is now part of the 6 bridges on the pathways program which is a part of the statewide program. Larry and company have discussed how to finance the bridges and have turned it over to an entity similar to the RBR in which they will repair the bridge and maintain the bridge for thirty years before returning the bridge back to PennDOT. Fisher comments the construction start date for the bridge in Susquehanna County will begin on July 2023 and complete on June 2028. The Gibson project will be let in March of 2024 and he believes there are still complications to the project due to contaminations within the region of the project. Hall asks Fisher if there are any plans to address the pothole problem on Route 492 or other routes in the county. Fisher is hopeful that the additional funding to fix Route 29 will free up some pre-existing maintenance funds which could be allocated to address the potholes on Route 492 or other routes in the county. Hall comments how the slides that were redone on Route 29 and 1033 are both failing again. He believes that three bridges could have been financed and completed with the time and funding that has gone into these slides that keep failing. Fisher explains how a capital budget for highways was passed recently, and he hopes that they can push funding towards various four-digit SRs in Susquehanna and Wyoming County due to the condition of the roads. Hall asks to meet with Fisher after the meeting to discuss a couple bridges that need to be turned over to PennDOT for repairs or replacements.

D. County Reports

1. Bradford County

Biery comments that he has no updates for Bradford County at the moment and he wishes everyone a happy holiday.

2. Sullivan County

Getz offers his concerns on what may be a state wide issue regarding the ash trees that are falling onto wires and roads, and it only seems like the fire companies are able to address or resolve this issue in a timely manner. He wonders if these fire companies could be reimbursed for the work of removing trees, and ultimately who should be responsible for this work: the fire companies, PennDOT, or the telephone/electric companies like Frontier or Penelec. Getz explains his own experiences on nearly crashing his car into these fallen ash trees. Baker explains that electric companies like Claverack or Penelec will respond to calls about fallen trees but can only remove them from their lines. Most wires along the highways are telephone lines which fall under the jurisdiction of Frontier, who do not express the same responsibility and response to removing fallen trees as the electric companies do. Baker continues to explain that PennDOT only has a certain Right of Way with the roads, and once the issue is located outside the right of way the property owner is involved and the property owner has the final say if the tree is cut down or not. Hall comments that he recently sat on a meeting about this issue and Penelec has stated that if the fallen tree is on power lines then they will come out to remove the tree, but they will not deal with other fallen trees. In addition, the fire companies have stated that they cannot touch any trees on the electric lines. Hall has reached out to Frontier who have stated that their lines are wrapped in Kevlar and can withstand the weight of a tree resting on the wires. Jugan comments that PennDOT has removed debris off the side of the road, and that people will get out of their cars to move debris on the road to the side so they can get through. Batiuk offers if Getz has any locations of fallen trees to share them with him in order to get the information to the right people at PennDOT to get them removed. Hoffman explains to Batiuk the history of this issue where there is the combination of a tree death epidemic and a volunteer fire fighter crisis. Hoffman has reached out to District 3.0 to schedule an in person meeting at a local fire department meeting in Sullivan County to discuss this issue, but he has not been successful in setting it up. Hoffman shares that the fire companies believe they are responding to these non-emergency calls more than they should be and it is draining the fire companies' personnel resources. Hoffman has discussed the possibility of reimbursing the fire companies for removing the fallen trees. Hall wonders who is responsible for keeping the roads closed in order to remove the fallen trees where necessary, and comments that there is not enough man power for the fire companies or for PennDOT to dedicate to this issue. Jugan explains that its too dangerous for citizens to take care of it by themselves since they do not have the power to close the roads.

Hoffman offers two updates for Sullivan County. PennDOT approved the Hillsgrove covered bridge project to install running boards to preserve the deck of the bridge. The project is currently out for bidding at the moment. Hoffman comments that BeST Transit has been in contact with workforce development at Northern Tier to continue developing an internship program.

Getz asks Baker if there is a possibility to schedule an in-person meeting with interested parties to discuss the situation of fallen trees. Baker asks who would all need to be attending the meeting besides from the fire, electric, and telephone companies.

Getz suggests to reach out to the Senator or Representatives. Hall agrees and comments that he reached out to Representative Fritz's office to schedule similar meetings for Susquehanna County. Baker explains that Frank Thompson, Northern Tier's new executive director, expressed interest in restarting the Northern Tier Municipal Summits, and offers to share this issue regarding fallen trees as a topic to discuss at the municipal summit. Baker asks if anyone on the committee both in person or remote regarding any additional topic suggestions for the municipal summit. Fisher suggests a discussion on grant opportunities available to municipalities through the various funding streams like PennDOT or DCED. Hall offers to share grant information with the municipalities within Susquehanna County if there is a document or flyer that can be shared. Voloshin offers to reach out to Katie Smith for a copy of the flyers they shared with municipalities previously. Hoffman asks if the 5 counties are willing to sign a formal letter addressing their concerns regarding non-emergency road closures within the region as a part of the potential municipal summit. Baker comments that the letter would most like need to be signed by commissioners from each county. Hall comments that it would not be a problem for Susquehanna County. Hoffman agrees with Hall. Baker explains that the email regarding signing the formal letter should come from Northern Tier's Executive Director.

3. Susquehanna County

Hall mentions that Susquehanna County's public safety center is almost complete, but they did run into some issues with the contractors. A new tower was built near Thompson to enhance the county's 911 capabilities, and the county plans to build an additional three towers over the next year to provide further coverage. Fisher asks for an update regarding the catalytic converter thefts that occurred at the public safety building. Hall comments that this was the third time that the county was hit with this issue, and the police have a couple leads they are tracking. The county has decided to serialize their catalytic converters on the vehicles in order to track the parts in case of any future thefts. Hall explains that the insurance was able to cover the costs of the damages, but their rates increased as a result.

4. Tioga County

Al Quimby comments that there are no updates to be shared for Tioga County at the time.

5. Wyoming County

Farber comments that there are no updates to be shared for Wyoming County at the time.

E. BEST Report

Tracy Eisenbury introduces herself to the committee. Eisenbury comments that BeST has been conducting trial runs of a new extension route that connects Laporte to Mildred and Dushore and runs further into Bradford County. BeST aims to make it a permanent route through the multimodal grant project. BeST is also implementing a new program that will allow passengers to purchase bus tickets online or via an app on their smart devices. It is now called "Token Transit", and while the service is live it has not been released to the public as of yet. BeST's veiled system as part of the Fritz's program will begin being installed in 2023 into 2024. It is an upgraded video system, destination finds, and route tracking schedule system software which will allow passengers to find updates on bus delays, where they are on the scheduled stops, and additional schedule information.

F. BMTS Report

No members present to provide an update at the current time.

G. NTRPDC Report

Baker comments that the topic of the municipal summits would have been discussed at this point of the meeting, but the discussion occurred earlier in the meeting.

III. Other Items for Discussion

No other items were discussed at this point of the meeting.

IV. Public Discussion

No topics of public discussion occurred that this point of the meeting.

V. Adjournment & Next Scheduled Meeting

Baker thanks all committee members for attending the meeting wishes the committee a happy holiday. The next RTAC meeting will occur in February of 2023. Jugan raises a motion to adjourn this meeting, Hall seconds the motion, and the motion to adjourn was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 11:34 AM.