

Northern Tier Regional Transportation Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

Date: Monday, February 13th, 2023
10 AM – 11 AM
NTRPDC Conference Room
Towanda, PA

Attendees: Brian Baker, NTRPDC
Brett Voloshin, NTRPDC
Frank Thompson, NTRPDC
Bob Simmons, BeST Transit
Alexandra Allen, Representative Fritz
Rick Biery, Bradford County
Mark Hamilton, Tioga County Commissioner
Dean Roberts, PennDOT Central Office
Alan Quimby, Tioga County
Matt Wise, Senator Jean Yaw
Justin Batiuk, PennDOT District 3.0
Marie Bishop, PennDOT District 4.0
Chris King, PennDOT District 4.0
Michael Gismondi, PennDOT Central Office
Vanessa Shamberg, FHWA
Allan Hall, Susquehanna County
Fred Jugan, Sullivan County
Lynelle Farber, Wyoming County
Brian Hoffman, Sullivan County
Steve Fisher, PennDOT District 4.0
Bob Getz, Sullivan County
Emma Pugh, PennDOT District 4.0
Jack Conroy, Susquehanna County
Alex Komar, Susquehanna County

I. Items For Discussion

A. Approve December 12, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Brian Baker begins the meeting by asking the committee for any issues or changes that need to be made to the meeting minutes. Alexandra Allen mentioned that her name was misspelled on the previous minutes. Brian Hoffman mentions that Fred Jugan's name was mistyped as "Jugan Jugan." Brian Baker confirms that Brian Hoffman is correct and promises that the errors will be corrected. Hearing no other comments or issues with the meeting minutes Allan Hall makes a motion to approve the minutes, Fred Jugan seconds, and the motion was passed unanimously.

B. 2023 – 2026 TIP Administrative Actions & Amendments

District 3.0 Admin Actions and Amendments

Justin Batiuk explains that the actions displayed on the screen are for informational purposes only, so the committee does not need to vote on any actions or amendments at this time for District 3.0. Justin Batiuk opens the discussion for any questions. Bob Getz questions why there is money being transferred from Bradford County to Sullivan County. Justin Batiuk explains that the districts typically chose a county within their

region to allocate additional funding until needed elsewhere. The idea is to mimic a bank account where the district will store the additional funding in one account, and relocate the funding when necessary. Justin Batiuk expresses that funding is not coming out of Bradford County, but rather the funding is still coming out of the RPO of a whole and was just being stored in a line item in Bradford County. Bob Getz asks Justin Batiuk that since the money is being transferred to Route 154, does that mean the project is ready to be opened. Justin Batiuk asks what page Bob Getz is referring to. Justin Batiuk believes he has heard from the maintenance department that the projects on Route 154 have been pushed out, and should begin construction in 2024. Bob Getz expresses that he was mentioning a different project. Justin Batiuk finds the right MPMS number and explains that Sullivan is considered a “broke County” and therefore do not have the maintenance funding necessary for this project like other counties would. The project in Sullivan County is using TIP funds instead. Bob Getz refers back to Route 154 and asks for an update regarding the slide or if the road will be open. Justin Batiuk offers to inquire about an update for Bob Getz and share it with him or with the RPO. Bob Getz comments that he saw cars driving on Route 154 towards the location of the project and he was unsure if the project was completed or not.

Fred Jugan comments that the new secretary in Cherry township has submitted the paperwork for the refund on the bridge project he mentioned at the last meeting. Justin Batiuk mentions that he heard from his sources that things were beginning to move forward again. He found the email he received and mentions the cost to be refunded was 498,000\$ and should be completed sometime in the Spring. Fred Jugan thanks Justin Batiuk for the information.

District 4.0 Admin Actions & Amendments

Steve Fisher echoes Justin Batiuk in that the actions and amendments shared on the screen are for informational purposes only, and the committee does not need to vote on anything at this time. Steve Fisher offers to take any specific questions at this time. Brian Baker comments that there was a lot of confusion surrounding the letter that was mailed to residents along Route 29 in Susquehanna County. Residents were under the impression that the repaving of Route 29 was going to begin this month due to how the letter was worded. Steve Fisher believes that if any work was being conducted on the project at this time, it was preliminary work like surveying the land or removing trees.

C. Northern Tier RPO Long Range Transportation Plan Update

Brian Baker explains that the Northern Tier RPO participated in a meeting with PennDOT and FHWA that marked 30 months out from submitting the Northern Tier Long Range Transportation Plan. The Northern Tier LRTP needs to be adopted by mid-April of 2025. Brian Baker mentions that some of the work will be completed in house by the Northern Tier RPO, but most of the work will be completed with the help of a contracted consultant. Brian Baker asks Dean Roberts for clarification on when the RPO was planning to begin the process of reaching out to consultants. Dean Roberts agrees that a Spring timeframe sounds correct. Brian Baker introduces Northern Tier’s new FHWA rep, Vanessa Shamberg, and how she will be assisting Northern Tier during this update process. Brian Baker ensures the committee that they will be a part of the process, and they will be able to raise comments and concerns as necessary.

Steve Fisher asks if Brian Baker aims to use PennDOT’s open end to fund the consultant. Brian Baker explains that he still needs to discuss Northern Tier RPO’s budget with their financial advisor before he can move forward with searching for a consultant.

D. Local Bridge Subcommittee

Brian Baker describes that Northern Tier is in the process of scheduling the next Local Bridge Subcommittee meeting. He aims for the meeting to be held sometime in March. Brian Baker expresses how Northern Tier has been working with SEDA-COG to develop a process to rank and prioritize local bridges that is more specific to the Northern Tier region. Brian Baker ensures that a date and time will be chosen shortly and those in the committee participating in this subcommittee will be notified in a timely manner.

E. New Milford Borough Bridges, Church Street & Johnston Street

Brian Baker explains that a meeting was held last week with District 4.0, Commissioner Allan Hall, members from Lisa Baker's office, and other interested parties. Brian Baker asks Steve Fisher if District 4.0 wanted the committee to vote on the changes being made to the plan for these bridges. Steve Fisher agrees that a vote should be held in case this comes up in a later discussion. Brian Baker explains to the committee that the Church Street bridge is listed on the TIP and Northern Tier does have the paperwork from when the bridge was initially listed on the TIP. However, the Johnston Street bridge is the only access point for 33 houses, and the bridge has been recorded to only support 4 tons of weight. New Milford Borough is afraid of the bridge collapsing in the future, so they wish to change the priority from the Church Street bridge to the Johnston Street bridge for on the TIP. Allan Hall comments that Brian Baker summed up the situation well. He comments with the bridge being at a four-ton capacity, emergency services can drive an ambulance over the bridge, but a fire truck would not make it across. Allan Hall mentions that the Church Street bridge has multiple detour routes that drivers can take to bypass the bridge, so there is not much problem is the priority is changed to focus on Johnston Street. Fred Jugan comments that the bridge will not last long if fuel trucks are driving over it, but Allan Hall assures Fred Jugan that the fuel trucks are a smaller variety that the bridge can support for the time being. Brian Baker mentions that the bridge cannot be repaired and has to be replaced due to the excessive wear and tear the Johnston Street bridge has experienced. Brian Baker expresses the concerns the municipal officials from New Milford Borough had, and asks Steve Fisher for any comments. Steve Fisher describes that the municipality should be seeking other funding sources to aid in expediting the process to replace the bridge.

Brian Baker asks for a motion and a second to get on record that the committee approves of the change in bridge prioritization on the TIP. Steve Fisher makes the motion, Jack Conroy seconds the motion, and the motion passes unanimously. Bob Getz asks if school busses are traversing the bridge, and Allan Hall assures him that they were not running school busses over the bridge in the first place due to an overhead clearance issue. Allan Hall comments that there needs to be a bigger push for local bridges to be listed on the TIP over state bridges for reasons like this situation. Brian Baker shares his appreciation with the committee and he assures that New Milford Borough will appreciate it too.

F. Northern Tier Municipal Summits

Brian Baker begins by introducing Frank Thompson, NTRPDC's Executive Director. Brian Baker explains that Northern Tier is restarting the annual Municipal Summits this year. Northern Tier plans to host two summits this year and present various topics as discussed with the committee in a prior meeting. Frank Thompson expresses that the two summits this year will be held in different counties, one in Susquehanna County at the 911 center and one in Bradford County at their 911 center. Brian Baker agrees and describes that both summits will discuss the same topics, but may

not have the same speakers; like different PennDOT representatives due to being in two different PennDOT districts. Frank Thompson lists the different topics being considered for discussion at the Municipal Summits this year including issues with EMS, responsibility for fallen tree removal, blight control, issues with SAM registration, and offers to take any additional ideas the committee may have for the summits. Frank Thompson expresses that NTRPDC has opened a new position for community development within the region and has hope that whoever fills the position could speak at the summit as well regarding grant opportunities available to municipalities. Brian Baker explains that the summits will be held on back-to-back weeks instead of the same week. Frank Thompson agrees with Brian Baker and asks the committee if they know of any speakers who could present at the summits to share them with Brian Baker or himself. Brian Baker asks Justin Batiuk and Steve Fisher who he should get in contact with about presenting at the municipal summits regarding the tree situation, and Steve Fisher recommends to reach out to Brian Long. Brian Baker asks if Steve Fisher hears about these issues or concerns at the district level, and he explains that he does hear about it, but it is nothing different than the concerns being voiced within the committee. Allan Hall expresses that the trees are clogging up the ditched along the sides of the road and there is not enough manpower to remove them all. Justin Batiuk recommends Jordan Fye and Brett Runkel who both handle the tree trimming contracts at District 3.0. He also recommends reaching out to PennDOT's maintenance services to have a representative come up for the summits. Brian Baker appreciates the recommendations from both Districts. Bob Getz mentions that if the trees on powerlines are near the roads then they are fine, but there needs to be tree commissions within more urban areas to oversee them and remove any poor quality or dying tree. He believes the existing tree commissions should be involved in this discussion as well. Lynelle Farber explains the process of removing the trees within Tunkhannock Borough with their tree commission.

G. Supplemental Funding Update: Marsh Creek Greenway & Tunkhannock Mobility

Mark Hamilton briefly explains that the Marsh Creek Greenway does have a bid package for the southern section of the greenway, and they expect the bid to go out some time in March. He hopes the bids will come back at a reasonable rate and that construction will start later this year. He hopes the committee will stay tuned as they are just getting started.

Lynelle Farber expresses that they need to reach out to the consultant regarding some GIS work, but they believe the final report will be submitted by the end of March, if not before. Lynelle Farber explains that there have been some communication issues about the GIS work being completed.

H. LTAP

Brian Baker explains that Northern Tier is going to push for more in person trainings and classes during the spring season. He is aware that road crews are busy during the summer and fall months so they aim to hold classes in the spring for better attendance.

I. GIS Report

Brett Voloshin briefly explains that he is still conducting work for Katie Smith in the form of maps needed for grant applications, or for the Endless Gravel Bikepacking Loop through any updates requested by the EMGBL committee.

II. County & Agency Reports

A. Legislative Reports

Alexandra Allen comments that there are no new reports from the House.

Matt Wise comments that there are no new reports from the Senate either.

B. FHWA Reports

Brian Baker officially welcomes Vanessa Shamberg to the committee meetings. Vanessa Shamberg introduces herself as the new lead for Northern Tier and she is looking forward to working with everyone. Vanessa Shamberg mentions that she does not have anything to report from FHWA aside from the introductory meetings scheduled with PennDOT and the Northern Tier RPO. She commends Northern Tier for kicking off the process towards their LRTP update as FHWA has been advocating for regions to do the same. She offers that if anyone in the committee has any questions or needs any assistance to please call or email her and she will be happy to help.

C. PennDOT Reports

1. Central Office

Dean Roberts mentions that Central Office hopes to accelerate the process of sending out the guidance for the 2025 program update. They hope to have the general procedure, financial, and UPWP guidance released by the end of February or March this year. Dean Roberts feels that this is a good time to get ahead of the game due to the recent legislative changes in PA. Dean Roberts offers to reach out on behalf of Brian Baker to hopefully find someone to speak at the municipal summits regarding the fallen tree issue. Brian Baker appreciates the assistance.

Mike Gismondi comments that Central Office plans to release the guidance on the off years of the program updates. He hopes that this change will make conducting the program updates easier for both parties involved.

2. District 3.0

Justin Batiuk comments that District 3.0 is currently working on their annual legislative outreach event, and believes Brian Baker should receive information regarding the event soon. Justin Batiuk mentions that he has some PennDOT connects sessions to schedule so he plans to reach out to Brian Baker soon to get them scheduled.

3. District 4.0

Steve Fisher comments that District 4.0 is hosting a PennDOT Connects municipal outreach session on March 28th at the district office, and he hopes to have more information to share with the Committee soon.

D. County Reports

Susquehanna County: Allan Hall expresses that Susquehanna County has 33 local bridges and there needs to be a push to get local bridges back on the TIP or to get more funding for these bridges. Allan Hall hopes that the projects on Route 81 and the Gibson exit are still underway. He lists off various roads and bridges that have been experiencing issues that Susquehanna County has been dealing with recently. Brian Baker asks Steve Fisher if Brian Small is still hosting spring and fall cab meetings, and Steve Fisher does not know if those meetings are going to be restarted. He echoes Dean Roberts in that he will reach out at the district level to find individuals interested in attending the discussions at the municipal summits.

Wyoming County: Lynelle Farber comments that the Heritage Region is hosting a grant workshop in March at the Dietrich Hall. She is aware that multiple organizations are attending to discuss their grant opportunities, and wanted to be sure that the committee was aware of the event.

Sullivan County: Brian Hoffman comments that he does not have much to report aside from the project in World's End State Park is on schedule to be completed and they have not received any complaints. Justin Batiuk offers to get an update on the project shortly.

Bradford County: Rick Biery comments that he has nothing to report at the moment.

Tioga County: Mark Hamilton agrees with Allan Hall regarding the local bridge dilemma, but does not feel it necessary to comment. Regarding the Marsh Creek Greenway, the track is being pulled up at this point in time and is being completed at no additional cost to the county. Mark Hamilton comments that most of the boroughs in Tioga County have ordinances regarding tree removal. He mentions that two public hearings will be held with Frontier representatives, and he hopes that information will be shared. Allan Hall asks if a road in Tioga County has been reclassified as an interstate highway, and Mark Hamilton expresses that they are still in the process of getting the road reclassified. Allan Hall asks if a date has been shared, but Mark Hamilton expresses it is hopefully completed by 2026.

E. BEST Reports

Bob Simmons reports that BeST is working on getting the fixed route service back to the shopping centers and setting up the best times and days for those routes.

F. BMTS Reports

No one present at the meeting to give a report on BMTS.

G. NTRPDC Reports

Brian Baker and Frank Thompson both comment that there are no new reports to share with the committee at this time.

III. Other Items For Discussion

Steve Fisher shares a flyer District 4.0 created to describe current grant and funding opportunities available so the committee is aware.

IV. Public Discussion

No other discussions were held at this time of the meeting.

V. Adjournment & Next Scheduled Meeting

The next RTAC meeting will be held on April 3rd, 2023 at 10 am in a hybrid format. Brian Baker asks for a motion and a second to adjourn the meeting. Fred Jugan makes the motion, Allan Hall seconds, and the motion was passed unanimously. The meeting was officially adjourned at 11:10 AM.