

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

Date: Monday, June 12th, 2023
10 AM – 11 AM
NTRPDC Conference Room
Towanda, PA

Attendees: Brian Baker, NTRPDC
Brett Voloshin, NTRPDC
Chris King, PennDOT District 4.0
Rick Biery, Bradford County
Kaye Aumick, Tioga County
Vanessa Shamberg, FHWA
Dean Roberts, PennDOT Central Office
Marie Bishop, PennDOT District 4.0
Cameron Serafini, RVTA/BeST
Allan Hall, Susquehanna County
Jack Conroy, Susquehanna County
Alex Komar, Susquehanna County
Steve Fisher, PennDOT District 4.0
Brian Hoffman, Sullivan County
Bob Getz, Sullivan County
Fred Jugan, Sullivan County
Kim Jennings, NTRPDC
Frank Thompson, NTRPDC
Alexandra Allen, Representative Fritz
Mark Grochocki,

I. Items for Discussion

a. Approve April 3, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Brian Baker welcomed all attendees to the meeting and gave brief introductions of who the attendees represent. Since enough members are present to hold a quorum, Brian Baker asked if any attendees had any questions or comments regarding the April meeting minutes. Allan Hall makes a motion to approve the meeting minutes, the motion was seconded by Fred Jugan, and the motion passed unanimously.

b. 2023 – 2026 TIP Administrative Actions & Amendments

PennDOT District 3.0 Admin Actions & Amendments:

Chris King explains that the actions recently shared with the committee are basic fiscal adjustments. Chris King opens the discussion for any questions now or at the end of the meeting if necessary. Multiple members of the committee chimed in asking why the document is not organized by county like they are used to. Brian Baker explains that he receives the documents from Dean Roberts at PennDOT Central Office, and asks Dean Roberts if he can organize the document by district. Dean Roberts believes he is able to make that adjustment and is willing to do so, but he may need a reminder before the next meeting. Brian Baker asks if there are any additional questions for District 3.0. Fred Jugan comments that he would like to make sure that the District did receive the

documents from Cherry Township. Brian Baker offers to follow up with Justin Batiuk, once he is back from vacation.

PennDOT District 4.0 Admin Actions & Amendments

Steve Fisher comments that, similarly to District 3.0, District 4.0 does not have any fiscal adjustments of significance to mention specifically. Steve Fisher opens the discussion for any questions, and mentions that the District has received various correspondence regarding the Route 6 paving phase that is being added to the program on the third to last page of the document. Brian Baker asks which part of Route 6 is being paved, and Steve Fisher responds that they received two federal paving contracts. One runs from 87 to the Excel Warehouse, and the other runs from the same warehouse to the PennDOT shed on Route 6. The next contract the District would receive should go towards paving the next section of Route 6, which would extend past the fairgrounds.

Brian Baker asks if there are any questions for Steve Fisher. Allan Hall explains there are two bridges that are in concerning condition within the county: the first being the Johnston Street bridge in New Milford, PA and the old Route 11 bridge. There have been previous conversations regarding the Johnston Street bridge, and it appears to Allan Hall that Dunmore wants to spend \$700,000 to increase the weight rating of the bridge and replace the bridge within three to five years. Allan Hall does not agree with this plan because he believes they can replace the bridge for less than one million rather than spending four million when other bridges can get fixed with the money spent fixing this one bridge. Allan Hall also mentions that the Johnston Street bridge was designated as a historical bridge and that the bridge can be used as a walking bridge for a Rails to Trails project instead. Allan Hall comments that the county lost the battle with PUC for the Old Route 11 bridge. PUC designated that the township owns the bridge and needs to be replaced within five years. Both of these bridges are in critical condition with the Johnston Street bridge serving around thirty homes with no other access point, and the Old Route 11 bridge having a 45-minute detour for emergency services or other vehicles. Allan Hall would like to set up meetings with District 4.0 and PennDOT Central office to hopefully get a better game plan for repairing or replacing local bridges in Susquehanna County.

Steve Fisher comments that he has attended meetings regarding the Johnston Street bridge. He explains that the project regarding spending \$700,000 on the bridge exists as a contingency plan to allow access to those houses in case the bridge should collapse before being repaired or replaced. Steve Fisher believes the intent of the project is to move forward with the full replacement of the bridge which would require the environmental and historical clearances to move the bridge. The timeframe of the project is extended to five years due to the historical designation of the bridge. Bob Getz asks Steve Fisher if District 4.0 has multiple blueprints of bridges like District 3.0 does. Sullivan County had their bridges replaced in two to three years because they utilized those blueprints. Steve Fisher believes District 4.0 should have similar blueprints to District 3.0, but due to the situation surrounding the Johnston Street bridge those cookie cutter blueprints would not work. Brian Baker asks when the bridge received the historical designation as he does not remember the bridge receiving that designation. Allan Hall explains that the bridge received that designation once he started meeting with the PennDOT Historical Truss Bridge Group. Due to unforeseen technical issues, portions of the conversation were lost on recording and therefore could not be transcribed at this time.

Steve Fisher comments that Great Bend Township had signed a letter of commitment of funds for the TA 21 project, and they are currently undergoing the process of selecting a consultant. Allan Hall comments that it would be very detrimental if the bridge closed, and that the process to repair or replace local bridges feels like it is being unnecessarily drawn out. Steve Fisher explains that District 4.0 renegotiated the process because it was taking so long to get the documentation and the reimbursements out. Brian Baker asks Steve Fisher if the retroactive reimbursement program would be effective for the Johnston Street bridge, and Steve Fisher disagrees due to the size of the structure, the eligibility for federal funding, and the permits and clearance necessary for the project. Bob Getz asks Allan Hall if the Secretary of Transportation, Carol, knows about the Johnston Street bridge problem. Allan Hall responds that she probably does not know, but he plans to give her a phone call next week. Due to continued technical issues, a large portion of the conversation was not recorded and cannot be transcribed at this time.

Allan Hall asks Dean Roberts to schedule a meeting with the Secretary of Transportation. Dean Roberts exchanges his phone number with Allan Hall and they agree to work on setting up a meeting. Chris King mentions that District 3.0 limits the retroactive reimbursement program to smaller structures due to the local share is twenty percent; however, the local share on federal funds is only five percent. Steve Fisher comments that District 3.0 probably deals with less “impactful” bridges like those with historical designations. Chris King agrees and comments that it relates to the cost of the project.

c. TA Set-Aside Program 2023

Brian Baker moves onto discussing the TA set aside program for this year. The committee has received documentation on the grant guidance. The program started in May this year, applications are due for District review by July 17th, and final applications are due by September 15th this year. Brian Baker implores all attendees to send out the email and documentation to anyone they believe would be interested or would benefit from this program. Brian Baker explains the process of the application review and how it pertains to the committee. He mentions that applicants who make it through the selection process from the Northern Tier region will present their project at an RTAC meeting later this year. Brian Baker opens the discussion for any questions at this time.

d. I-81 Susquehanna Bridge Stakeholder Update Webinar

Brian Baker continues onto sharing an update regarding the I-81 Susquehanna Bridge. The news release on the project was shared with the committee before this meeting, and a webinar will be hosted later in the week. Brian Baker mentions that the bridge polling is now off the table with the recent update. Brian Baker asks Steve Fisher if he would be able to provide a brief update for the committee. Steve Fisher explains that on July 5th they will provide a limited notice to proceed, set up for advance signing, reconstruct northbound/southbound shoulders and emergency pull off areas, support excavation, SR 1029 shift, SR 1029 structure partial demolition, SR 1029 substructure excavate, advance signing, and overpass at Route 171. The aforementioned webinar will provide more details on this update.

e. Northern Tier Municipal Summit

Brian Baker reminds the committee that Northern Tier Regional Planning & Development Commission hosted two summits for municipal officials this year: one hosted in Bradford County, and one hosted in Susquehanna County. This was the first time the municipal summits were hosted since the Covid-19 Pandemic, and it was well attended by municipal officials. Many great topics

and great discussions were fostered at both events. Brian Baker asks Frank Thompson if NTRPDC plans to host municipal summits annually and Frank Thompson agrees. Brian Baker comments on the solar panels discussion during the Susquehanna municipal summit was very eye opening. Jack Conroy commented that he only learned about the solar panel farm being built in Susquehanna County during the summit. Steve Fisher comments that he never would have thought placing a bond on solar panels would exist until that summit. Brian Baker was surprised to find that solar panels would have an impact on transportation due to the number of trucks needed to haul the panels and equipment to operate the farms which places increased traffic on backroads. Fred Jugan was surprised to learn that if the company that owns the farm goes bankrupt the land owner is stuck with the solar panels on their property, and it is the land owner's responsibility to remove them. Allan Hall comments that Susquehanna County placed an ordinance that requires the company to put in for a bond of reclamation before solar panels can be installed on a property, so the landowner is not responsible for removing the panels if the company were to go bankrupt. The current issue with solar panels is that there is only one place within the entire United States that will recycle solar panels.

f. Supplemental Funding Update: Marsh Creek, Tunkhannock Mobility

Marsh Creek Update:

Kaye Aumick mentions that she does not work closely with the funding side of the project and therefore is unable to provide an update, however, Deb Bigly would be a better contact to provide an update. Brian Baker asks if there are any plans to apply for the TA Set-Aside grant. Kaye Aumick believes that they most likely will put in an application.

Tunkhannock Mobility Update:

No representatives present to provide an update.

g. LTAP

Brian Baker comments that he will be working with Brett Voloshin to schedule LTAP classes for the fall season. Brian Baker mentions that there are online LTAP classes available on the website.

h. GIS Report

Brett Voloshin mentions that he has been continuing to work on mapping the Endless Mountains Gravel Bikepacking Loop. Due to concerns with excess paved roads on the route and private/public road distinctions the committee for the EMGBL has decided to redesign the route.

II. County & Agency Reports

a. Legislative Reports

Alexandra Allen comments that there are no new updates from the house at this time.
Mark Grochocki comments that there are no new updates from the senate at this time.

b. FHWA Report

Vanessa Shamberg mentions that there are a number of grants open at the federal level available for municipalities and counties to apply for. The first grant is the Safe Streets and Roads for All which is intended for safety projects for both planning and implementation, and applications are due July 10th. The second grant mentioned is the Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program, applications are due August 1st, this is the first year that the grant is being offered. The third grant is PROTECT which focuses on resilience related projects like for flood resilience, and the applications are due

on August 18th. Vanessa Shamberg offers to take any questions at this time and will place links in the Microsoft Teams chat for more information on the grants.

c. PennDOT Reports

i. Central Office

Dean Roberts mentions that PennDOT central office has released their guidance for the next program update, but are still waiting for federal approval on the MOU which is what they base all their amendments and TIP changes on. Dean Roberts asks Brian Baker if he could submit a Scope of work for Northern Tier RPO's next Long Range Transportation Plan. Brian Baker comments that Northern Tier RPO is waiting on discussions internally regarding funding available for hiring a consultant, and thanks Dean Roberts for his patience and assistance in the process.

ii. District 3.0

Chris King does not have any updates for the committee at this time. Various projects are currently underway, but none significant enough to mention at this time.

iii. District 4.0

Steve Fisher agrees with Chris King and reiterates that there are various projects currently underway, but none significant enough to mention at this time.

d. County Reports

i. Bradford County

Rick Biery comments that he understands Allan Hall's pain with having to deal with historic bridges, but other than that he does not have any updates to share.

ii. Sullivan County

Brian Hoffman mentions that Sullivan County has various stream stabilization projects being conducted at this time, a bus shelter project in motion, and a new communications tower being built.

iii. Susquehanna County

Allan Hall mentions that contractors are working on repaving the new public safety center at the contractors' expense. A sidewalk project being conducted in front of the courthouse, and work being done on the interior by moving apartments around to allow better access to the public.

iv. Tioga County

No new updates were provided at this time.

v. Wyoming County

No representatives present to provide an update at this time.

e. BEST Report

No new updates were provided at this time.

f. BMTS Report

No representatives present to provide an update at this time.

g. NTRPDC Report

Frank Thompson introduces Kim Jennings to the Committee. Kim Jennings mentions that she is available to provide grant writing or technical assistance for municipalities or members of the committee. Frank Thompson reminds Brian Baker regarding plans for having a solar panel presentation at the August meeting. Brian Baker thanks Frank Thompson, and explains that Matt Williams gave the presentation on solar panels for the Bradford County municipal summit, and Brian Baker asked him to give the presentation to the RTAC to provide insight into how Bradford County is tackling the issue.

III. Other Items For Discussion

Brian Hoffman asks who is the internet provider for Northern Tier RPO since there have been repeated technical issues across multiple RTAC meetings. Frank Thompson comments that their provider is Comcast, but he has not experienced many issues himself. Brett Voloshin comments that he seems to experience issues only during RTAC meetings. Al Quimby asks if it is possible for the meeting host to use an ethernet connection instead of a wireless connection. Brett Voloshin offers to work on setting up a wired connection for the next RTAC meeting.

IV. Public Discussion

No other discussions were held at this time.

V. Adjournment & Next Scheduled Meeting

The next RTAC meeting will be held on August 14th at 10 AM. Allan Hall makes a motion to adjourn the meeting, the motion was seconded by Fred Jugan, and the motion passed unanimously.