

PENNSYLVANIA STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
BUSINESS MEETING
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA
AUGUST 13, 2020



Please note that these minutes are not intended to capture every individual comment, but rather to identify critical discussion points and highlights of the STC business meetings.

CALL TO ORDER:

Mr. George M. Khoury convened the quarterly business meeting of the State Transportation Commission (STC) at 10:02 am on August 13, 2020.

ROLL CALL:

Commissioners Present on the Phone:

1. Honorable George M. Khoury, Secretary
2. Honorable Chad M. Amond
3. Honorable Ronald J. Drnevich
4. Honorable Paige M. Willan
5. Honorable Tim Hennessey
6. Honorable Michael Carroll
7. Honorable Kim Ward
8. Honorable John P. Sabatina
 Mr. Jason Gerard, Alternate Present
9. Honorable Sharon L. Knoll, Vice-Chair
10. Honorable James D. Kingsborough
11. Honorable Frank E. Paczewski

Commissioners Not Present

1. Honorable Yassmin Gramian

MINUTES:

ON A MOTION by Mr. Frank Paczewski and seconded by Mr. Ronald Drnevich, and unanimously approved, the May 6, 2020, STC business meeting minutes were accepted.

CHAIR'S REMARKS:

Mr. George Khoury welcomed Commissioners and guests to the STC meeting. Mr. Khoury noted that the 2021 Twelve Year Program is to be considered for adoption today. He explained that a lot of effort goes into the development of the program. It starts with the Transportation

Performance Report then moves to the Public Comment Period and culminates with the Prioritization of Projects by the MPOs and RPOs with limited funding. This was quite a team effort.

2019 TWELVE YEAR TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM: By Larry Shifflet

Deputy Secretary Larry Shifflet presented the 2019 Twelve Year Transportation Program (TYP) adjustments stating that between January 22, 2020, and April 24, 2020, there were 874 program adjustments including:

- 221 Project/Phase Additions
- 477 Project/Phase Changes
- 102 Project/Phase Deletions
- 74 Adjustments to Funding Line Items

Mr. Shifflet said that the overall changes represent an \$80,465,482 increase for the reporting period. Mr. Shifflet explained that \$42 million of this increase is the result of reprogramming de-obligated Federal funding.

Mr. Shifflet highlighted two projects in Allegheny County including the I-79/Alpine Road-Bridgeville project for \$3,000,000 and the 2020 Interstate Longitudinal Joint Repair for \$3,100,000.

Mr. Hennessey asked if the changes discussed in the book have already occurred?

Mr. Shifflet answered yes.

ON A MOTION by Mr. Jimmy Kingsborough and seconded by Mr. Frank Paczewski the 2019 Twelve Year Program Adjustments were unanimously approved.

WORKING SESSION

2021 12-YEAR PROGRAM: By Larry Shifflet

Deputy Secretary Larry Shifflet presented the 2021 Twelve Year Program (TYP).

Mr. Shifflet discussed the challenges the 2021 TYP faced including:

- *State Funding Reductions:* Revenue Projections show a \$289 million reduction in the first four years, a \$260 million reduction in the second four years, and a \$260 million reduction in the third four years compared to the 2019 TYP.
- *Federal Legislation:* FAST Act will expire at the end of September 2020
- *Interstate System:* The interstate system needs an annual investment of \$1.2 billion but the 2019 TYP allocated between \$450 and \$500 million annually. The 2021 TYP interstate funding increases gradually each year until reaching \$1 billion in 2028

Mr. Shifflet also discussed the Transportation Performance Measures for Highways and Bridges. He noted that there is a shift in the project decision-making to focus on Lowest Life Cycle Costs rather than ‘Worst First’ Programming.

Mr. Hennessey asked to have clarification about the meaning of the Lowest Life Cycle Cost approach.

Mr. Shifflet answered that the life cycle approach means doing the right treatment at the right time to extend the life cycle of the asset.

Deputy Secretary for Highway Administration Ms. Melissa Batula, P.E., added that the approach can be seen as doing preventive work on the asset as opposed to waiting for it to worsen and replace it.

Mr. Shifflet also discussed performance measures for System Performance, Freight Movement and CMAQ and Public Transit.

Mr. Shifflet mentioned the Transportation Asset Management Plan (TAMP), which is a FAST Act requirement. The TAMP encourages states to achieve and sustain a “state of good repair” over the life cycle of transportation assets, established targets for NHS pavement and bridge condition and forecasts asset conditions.

Mr. Shifflet gave a brief walkthrough of the Web version of the 2021 TYP. He showcased projects in Butler and Allegheny Counties.

Mr. Kingsborough asked when will the web format be available.

Mr. Mark Tobin answered that as soon as the STC votes to approve it, it will be available on the STC website. He added that the 2021 TYP won't be officially implemented until October 1, 2020.

Mr. Khoury asked about the quickest way to access the 2021 TYP online.

Mr. Tobin said that the document will be on talkpatransportation.com. Mr. Shifflet added that a direct link to the document can be shared with the STC members.

Mr. Ritchie shared Senator Ward's comments about the 2021 TYP, which raises three major concerns. Mr. Ritchie stated that *the financial guidance instructed each Planning Partner to cut spending from their regional TIP to meet an unfunded federal mandate established over 8 years ago (under MAP-21) and this mandate equates to diverting \$1 billion to the Interstate Program, which is managed solely by PennDOT.*

Mr. Ritchie also noted that the 2021 TYP was *based on flat-lined funding from Congress, even though the FAST Act expires next month, and the Program includes declining revenue projections from gas tax receipts and inflationary pressures and was developed prior to COVID-19. Discussion should be taking place to address the gaps in the construction program and funding shortfalls facing public transit agencies, airports and local governments.*

ON A MOTION by Mr. Frank Paczewski and seconded by Mr. Ronald Drnevich, the 2021 TYP Update was unanimously approved.

TRUCK WEIGHT STATUTORY EXEMPTIONS – A TAC IMPACT ANALYSIS: By Brian Funkhouser and Keith Chase.

Transportation Advisory Committee Chair, Ms. Jody Holton, AICP, introduced the TAC Truck Weight Exemptions study.

Mr. Brian Funkhouser, Michael Baker International, explained that the purpose of the study is to complete an initial assessment of the complex range of impacts of two decades of overweight truck permitting. The study, he added, is not intended to make recommendations, but rather to begin framing further discussions and research to inform decision-makers.

Mr. Funkhouser discussed the study methodology, which consisted of:

- Stakeholder engagement (trucking, rail, and shippers).
- Interviews with state officials.
- Literature review.
- Analysis of PennDOT permit data.

Mr. Keith Chase, Gannett Fleming, discussed nine findings, which include:

- PennDOT issued nearly 577,000 overweight permits over a two-year period from 2016 to 2018; overweight and oversize permits yielded a combined \$72 million in estimated revenue.
- Most truck weight-exempted travel under PennDOT permits originates and ends in Pennsylvania.
- Truck weight exemptions accelerate deterioration of Pennsylvania’s aging state and local road and bridge network. The cost of this damage cannot be determined using available data.
- Overweight truck permits may increase or decrease truck trips or truck miles depending on the freight economics of the situation.
- Truck weight exemptions appear to shift a significant portion of heavy truck traffic off Interstate highways and onto state and local roads, raising both infrastructure and safety concerns.
- Shippers whose commodities are transported using overweight permitted trucks are beneficiaries of the transport cost savings provided by the overweight permits. But the economic benefits of overweight permitting are not distributed evenly across Pennsylvania businesses and residents.
- Pennsylvania’s rail freight operators, particularly regional and short lines, are placed at a competitive disadvantage by some truck weight exemptions.
- Enforcement of truck weight limits is likely inconsistent across Pennsylvania’s municipalities.
- Experiences of other states can help inform PA’s further evaluation of truck weight exemptions.

Mr. Chase also discussed the Key Considerations including:

- The need for better data on costs to infrastructure, including cumulative impacts.
- The need for a broader understanding of the total positive and negative impacts of truck weight exemptions—particularly the economic impacts across industries and modes and the adverse impacts that cannot readily be quantified in dollar terms.
- The need for a more rigorous examination of overweight truck exemptions in light of other Commonwealth responsibilities and initiatives.

Mr. Hennessey commented that some States such as Michigan operate over the 80,000 pound weight limit.

Mr. Chase noted that the restrictions only apply to the Interstate.

Mr. Hennessey asked if extreme heat affects the roads and if PennDOT needs to limit weight based on weather conditions.

Ms. Batula answered that heat does not affect the permitting process or weight limit. She added that the materials used are good enough to handle the extreme heat the Commonwealth has experienced.

Mr. Hennessey asked if the revenue from the permitting is used to repair roads.

Mr. Chase answered that the revenues go to the Motor License Fund.

ON A MOTION by Mr. Tim Hennessey and seconded by Mr. Ronald Drnevich the Truck Weight Statutory Exemptions – A TAC Impact Analysis Study was unanimously approved.

PA Department of Transportation Update:

Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)

TAC chair, Ms. Jody Holton AICP, gave a brief report noting that the TAC's other two studies, *Utilities in the State Right-of-Way* and the *Statewide Small Local Bridge Investment Plan*, are progressing.

Ms. Holton also said that the House Transportation Committee will hold a hearing to discuss the TAC Transportation Funding Study.

Executive Deputy Secretary

Executive Deputy Secretary Mr. George McAuley, P.E., gave a brief report in which he thanked the TAC and the STC for their work on the studies and the 2021 TYP update.

Mr. McAuley noted that revenue projections remain worrisome, and the funding challenges are being studied. He added that the report will be shared with the STC when it is completed.

Administration and Budget

Mr. Robert Chiappelli, Deputy Secretary for Administration, gave a brief report about his Deputate. Mr. Chiappelli said that the majority of the Department's workforce is working on site and the rest is teleworking.

Mr. Chiappelli explained that the Governor's Office authorized PennDOT a blanket exception to the hiring freeze currently in place for the Commonwealth. The Department can now manage hiring decisions in accordance with their authorized complement and budget.

Mr. Chiappelli explained that the Office of Administration is establishing the foundations for a permanent telework policy to include a management directive. He added that PennDOT has created a Team to implement the directives when OA releases them.

Mr. Chiappelli also said that the PennDOT budget has been approved and winter temporary work hiring has started.

Mr. Chiappelli concluded his update noting the fact that the Bureau of Office Services continues to purchase PPEs for employees.

Driver and Vehicle Services

Deputy Secretary for Driver and Vehicle Services, Mr. Kurt Myers, gave an update about his Deputate. Mr. Myers explained that in early May, PennDOT implemented the use of photo on file for customers renewing a driver license or an identification card, which has allowed products renewed May 10 and forward to be completed online or through the mail and the product mailed to the customer.

Mr. Myers also noted that PennDOT has been working on redesigning the inspection stickers to prevent fraud. He added that there have been fraudulent driver's licenses coming from foreign countries and that the Department is constantly working to improve the security of its products.

Mr. Myers also discussed other ongoing initiatives designed to modernized DVS activities.

Mr. Myers concluded his update noting that the DVS is gearing up to resume issuing Real IDs late this summer.

Mr. Ritchie commented about issues related to COVID-19 safety protocol in school buses.

Mr. Myers explained that the proposal to add plexiglasses in school buses has faced multiple challenges because of federal regulations applying to school buses. He added that the DVS is still working on finding appropriate solutions.

Highway and Bridge Program

Deputy Secretary Ms. Melissa Batula, P.E., gave an update about Highway Administration Deputate.

Ms. Batula explained that revenue projections show an \$800 million revenue loss, which forced the Department to reevaluate the construction budget. She added that maintenance operations will continue because there is enough budget available.

Ms. Batula noted that the number of poor bridges has been reduced from 6,049 (Aug 2007) to 2,624 (June 2020) and that the Department is shifting its approach to do preventive work to address bridges before they get in poor condition.

Ms. Batula also noted that there has been a modest improvement on posted bridges and fatalities numbers continue to trend down, reaching the lowest number ever recorded.

Ms. Batula concluded her update saying that winter maintenance budget is available, and that salt prices have increased but asphalt prices have gone down.

Mr. Hennessey commented about bundling bridge repair projects, which he said tend to exclude smaller bidders.

Ms. Batula said that the Department is working hard to maintain a balance and take into account the various needs of all its contractors.

Multimodal Transportation

Deputy Secretary Ms. Jennie Granger, AICP, offered STC members to visit the Middletown Train Station Project site.

Ms. Granger also said that Amtrak is re-establishing full service at 50% capacity on September 8th, and the Pennsylvanian added a baggage car.

Mr. Kingsborough asked if there has been any change to the CARES Act funds being exclusively available to public airports.

Ms. Granger answered yes. She added that she has had conversations with the different parties, but nothing has come out of them.

Mr. Shelly asked if there is a clear picture of how much money the Department will be providing Amtrak.

Ms. Granger said that the initial projection was 16.3 million, but this is an ongoing conversation. She added that she will update the Commission when a decision is made.

Office of Planning

Report stands.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Khoury announced that he will not seek re-appointment when his term expires in October.

NEXT MEETING

The next STC quarterly meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, December 10, 2020**, in York, PA.

ADJOURNMENT

ON A MOTION by Mr. Jimmy Kingsborough and seconded by Mr. Frank Paczewski, the STC quarterly meeting was adjourned at 12:16 PM.

FOLLOW UP ITEMS

Multimodal Department Update

Deputy Secretary for Multimodal Transportation will provide additional information about PennDOT funding to Amtrak.