

Northern Tier Regional Transportation Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: Monday, August 14th, 2023
10 AM – 12 PM
NTRPDC Conference Room
Towanda, PA

Attendees: Brian Baker, NTRPDC
Brett Voloshin, NTRPDC
Frank Thompson, NTRPDC
Alan Hall, Susquehanna County
Jack Conroy, Susquehanna County
Alex Komar, Susquehanna County
Jean Ruhf, Wyoming County
Brian Hoffman, Sullivan County
Bob Getz, Sullivan County
Matt Williams, Bradford County
Rick Biery, Bradford County
Mark Rice, Tioga County
Mark Hamilton, Tioga County
Dean Roberts, PennDOT Central Office
Justin Batiuk, PennDOT District 3.0
Aaron Crist, PennDOT District 3.0
Steve Fisher, PennDOT District 4.0
Marie Bishop, PennDOT District 4.0
Vanessa Shamberg, FHWA
Alexandra Allen, Representative Fritz
Chuck Dillon, Senator Yaw
Mark Grochocki, Senator Baker
David Gunsallus, Larson Design Group
Cameron Serafini, RVTA/BeST

I. Items For Discussion

A. Approve June 12, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Brian Baker begins the meeting by asking for any questions or comments on the June meeting minutes. Alan Hall comments that his name was spelt wrong on the meeting minutes, and Brett Voloshin apologizes for the mistake. He makes a note to correct it on the June minutes and for future meeting minutes. Brian Baker asks for a motion to approve the minutes. Alan Hall makes the motion to approve, the motion is seconded by Brian Hoffman, and the motion passes unanimously.

B. 2023 – 2026 TIP Administrative Actions & Amendments

District 3.0 Admin Actions & Amendments

Justin Batiuk comments that as the end of the TIP year comes closer, these admin actions and amendments are focused on cash flow to maximize funding between federal fiscal years. The admin actions and amendments provided for this meeting are for informational purposes only, so Justin Batiuk opens the discussion for any questions. Matt Williams asks Justin Batiuk if he knows the updated let date for the Cayuta Creek bridge project. Justin Batiuk offers to look up the date quickly. Mark Hamilton asks Justin Batiuk if there

is a completion date for the project located at the intersection of Route 6 and Route 660. Justin Batiuk offers to look up that date as well. As for Matt Williams' question, Justin Batiuk comments that the project's let date was back in February of this year. Matt Williams asks if the project is out now or if the funds have been awarded. Justin Batiuk asks Aaron Crist if he could shed some more knowledge on the project. Aaron Crist mentions that it has been awarded to Susquehanna Valley Construction and they intend to start work on the project this fall season. Justin Batiuk refers back to Mark Hamilton's question and informs him that the physical work completion date is estimated to be in October this year. Brian Baker asks if there are anymore questions for Justin Batiuk at this time.

District 4.0 Admin Actions & Amendments

Steve Fisher mentions that the admin actions and amendments for District 4.0 are similar to District 3.0's to achieve the same goal of maximizing funding in between federal fiscal years. He warns that there may be some amendments that will need voting on at the next meeting. Steve Fisher mentions that one project to note in this packet is the Dietz Mountain project was let and District 4.0 has received a good bit of information on that project. Alan Hall asks if District 4.0 inspected SR 1023 out of Hallstead. Steve Fisher comments that he had asked Brian Small to get in touch with Alan Hall about the SR, but Alan Hall has not heard anything beyond the initial inspection. Steve Fisher offers to reach out to Brian Small again to hopefully share some information with Alan Hall. Alan Hall asks about the situation with Route 29 and comments that the project might take three years to finish at this rate. Steve Fisher is confused by the question, but offers to look into the situation for Alan Hall. Alan Hall also asks about the situation on Interstate 81 as it appears that project is also progressing slowly. Steve Fisher is unsure about that situation, but offers to research into it as the workers are supposed to be providing updates on the project. Jean Ruhf asked about the slide over Route 87. She comments that there has been quite a substantial amount of run off on that road and she fears what the conditions may be like during the winter season. Hearing the word "slide" reminded Alan Hall that he wanted to ask Steve Fisher about the slide on SR 1023 that has failed again. Steve Fisher comments that, with the efforts of Brian Baker, he has a list of slide locations within District 4.0 and hopefully they are able to set aside some funding to address the slide issues in Susquehanna and Wyoming Counties in full. Alan Hall asks if it would be more cost effective to build a bridge over the slide instead of this cycle of repairing slides only for them to fail again. Bob Getz comments on the situation with Route 87 where he is more concerned about two springs located beyond the scope of the completed project that still flow down the mountain which could continue to cause problems for this slide. Steve Fisher asks if anything has been done to mitigate this issue, and Bob Getz is unsure. Jean Ruhf comments that there are a lot of P&G trucks that utilize that road. Brian Baker asks if there are any more questions for either of the District representatives at this time.

C. Solar Presentation – Matt Williams, Bradford County Planning

Brian Baker gives a short introduction on the "Solar Energy Overview for Municipal Representatives" presentation that Matt Williams will provide the committee. Matt Williams has previously completed this presentation at one of the NTRPDC Municipal Summits in May of this year. Matt Williams explains that there are currently no regulations in place for solar panel installations; however, Bradford and Susquehanna County have made effort at the county level to introduce regulations. Solar panels can be divided into two sectors: the residential sector where they directly impact the home or business when installed on the roof and the commercial sector where the power generated is put into the power grid. Commercial

solar can be divided further into community solar and utility scale installations. Community solar is currently not allowed in Pennsylvania, but utility scale solar is allowed. Steve Fisher asks if the commercial installations need to be within a certain distance of a substation, and Matt Williams confirms that Steve Fisher is correct. Matt Williams continues by noting that Pennsylvania has more open land available than other mid-Atlantic states, the cost to install solar panels has decreased by 70% since 2010, and that Pennsylvania has been a major exporter of energy in recent history. Pennsylvania also has the critical infrastructure needed to export energy which further reduces the cost of construction. With the increase in solar panel installations, the main issues being faced now are leasing issues, land use issues, nuisance issues which refer to unwanted glare or noise from the panels, environmental impacts of the panels, and implications for first responders should a solar panel catch on fire. Matt Williams finishes his presentation by discussing how municipalities or counties can regulate solar panel installations within their jurisdiction. This can mainly be accomplished through SALDO, zoning, or through police powers.

Matt opens the discussion for any questions at this time. Bob Getz asks how long it takes a homeowner to recover the costs that went into installing solar panels on their roof. Matt Williams is unsure of an exact time frame, but believes the return on investment is around ten years. Steve Fisher comments that these panels have a warranty of twenty-five years, and Alan Hall comments that panels can be damaged after a hailstorm. Matt Williams explains that a commercial solar farm would want to replace those panels immediately due to the loss of revenue. Steve Fisher comments that there could also be concerns with building the panels too high where the solar panels could create an updraft. Alan Hall mentions his concerns more lie with hail damage as breaking the outer layers of the panels could expose harmful materials to rainwater that could leach the materials into the ground or into the waterways.

D. Carbon Reduction Funding – District 3.0

Justin Batiuk explains that there were funds set aside in the most recently passed bill designated for certain eligible activities or projects. Some eligible projects or activities are traffic monitoring, management, public transportation projects, facilities for non-motorized forms of transportation, or other projects to reduce carbon emissions. Currently, Northern Tier does not have a selection system for eligible projects. Justin Batiuk would like to work with Brian Baker and the committee to develop a system like the local bridge subcommittee to find projects eligible for these funds. Justin Batiuk mentions that in his conversations with Aaron Crist, the Marsh Creek Greenway project has had some funding shortfalls and would be eligible for this funding source. Justin Batiuk invites Aaron Crist to speak more on the issue as the committee would need to vote on the usage of these funds. Justin Batiuk mentions that the Marsh Creek Greenway is the only project he is aware of that would be eligible for the funds and District 3.0 has \$625,000 for 2023 and will have \$736,000 for the 2024 federal fiscal year.

Aaron Crist comments about the longevity of the Marsh Creek Greenway project and that the cost of the project with the costs of design included reaching thirteen to fourteen million. Tioga County has received funding from various federal, state, and even local funds for this project. Aaron Crist mentions that the railroad corridor was still active during the early days of the project and thus required the design of a new pathway alongside the railroad. However, with the efforts to formally abandon the railroad corridor within the project area has allowed the process to be streamlined in recent years. The southern section of the project is currently under construction with the northern section hopefully starting soon. Aaron Crist believes that the carbon reduction funding would help aid the funding shortfall the north section of the project is experiencing. Aaron Crist opens the discussion for any questions, or if Mark Rice would like to contribute anything to the conversation. Mark Rice mentions that they are

awaiting to hear back on an ARC grant application they put in for the trailhead site development building.

Alan Hall asks what amount of carbon reduction funding is available for District 4.0. Steve Fisher comments that the funding program is very restrictive on eligible projects, but District 4.0 has received \$12,000 in the first year and \$6,000 for the second and third year. Alan Hall asks why there is such a discrepancy in the amounts between District 3.0 and 4.0. Steve Fisher believes the discrepancy is due to District 3.0 having a larger rural area than District 4.0. However, District 4.0 is expecting to receive \$439,000 in the 2025 federal fiscal year. Dean Roberts suggests to double check the numbers as \$439,000 sounds more accurate than the original numbers provided. Dean Roberts agrees with Steve Fisher in that the funding program is very restrictive on eligible projects. Alan Hall asks about the differences between the Marsh Creek Greenway and other trail projects like Rails to Trails in Susquehanna County that makes the greenway project eligible and the other trail projects not eligible. Steve Fisher comments that he is curious how Justin Batiuk will present the project as his attempts to present eligible projects have been denied. Justin Batiuk believes the Greenway project is eligible because the document states that transportation alternative projects including on road or off-road trail facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, or other non-motorized forms of transportation are eligible. Justin Batiuk would like to work with the committee to develop a point or scoring system to prioritize eligible projects to receive these funds within the Northern Tier region. Alan Hall expresses his concerns to ensure that District 4.0 was also receiving an equal opportunity with this funding source. Steve Fisher refers to the 2025 TIP update sheet he has and explains that District 4.0 will receive \$439,000 the first year of the update and \$450,000 for each of the following years. Alan Hall asks if Steve Fisher is able to check on the amounts for the 2023 and 2024 federal fiscal years. Steve Fisher explains that District 4.0 will actually receive \$426,000 in the 2024 federal fiscal year for a total of \$434,000. Matt Williams asks for how many years the funds will be obligated for. Steve Fisher explains that the bill passed was a five-year transportation bill which may see multiple resolutions or a new bill will be passed after the initial five years. Alan Hall comments that this could be a very beneficial funding source for all the Northern Tier Counties. Steve Fisher, Justin Batiuk, and Dean Roberts comment that the bill was only recently shared with them at the turn of the federal fiscal year. The reason the Greenway project was focused on is because the funds would have needed to be allocated by October this year, and the Greenway was an undergoing project within the region. Alan Hall agrees for District 3.0 but his concerns lie with District 4.0. Dean Roberts interjects that there is a carbon reduction group working on a statewide carbon reduction plan, but unfortunately it is not close to being complete. He offers to share the document with the committee once completed, but Justin Batiuk has a good idea to develop a ranking system to prioritize projects within the region to justify the decision-making process.

Rick Biery asks Brian Baker if the committee could make a motion as he would prefer these discussions be done under the motion and not before. Rick Biery makes the motion to accept the Marsh Creek Greenway as the District 3.0 project for the first round of funding and Mark Hamilton seconds the motion. Justin Batiuk reminds the committee that the Greenway project was eligible for CMAQ funding in the past which helped contribute to the decision of the Greenway project being eligible for the carbon reduction funds. Dean Roberts asks Justin Batiuk for how much he was asking for. Justin Batiuk explains that he was planning to ask for both 2023 and 2024 federal fiscal year amounts for the Greenway project. Dean Roberts explains to the committee that at this moment in the TIP update process that these funds do not exactly carry over. Brian Baker explains that he understands the concerns from both sides of the room, and that the issue the committee is facing is being able to identify a project on such short notice for this funding source. Jean Ruhf asks if the funding is only for the 2024 federal fiscal year, and Matt Williams explains that the funding for this TIP is for two federal

fiscal years: 2023 and 2024. Matt Williams shares his support of the Greenway project as he believes there are no projects in Bradford County of that magnitude that would be eligible for carbon reduction funds. Bob Getz asks how much federal or state funding has the Greenway project received for the record of this committee. He believes the committee should know this information for future decisions made by the committee. Mark Hamilton comments that it may be beneficial if the total numbers were broken up by what the committee has agreed to allocate to the Greenway project and what amount the project has received independently in the form of grants. Bob Getz agrees but would still like to see that breakdown. Justin offers to work with Aaron Crist and Tioga County to develop a document outlining the overall funding breakdown, but the 2023 federal fiscal year is closing soon and if the districts do not allocate the funds before then they are liable to lose them. Bob Getz acknowledges the reasoning and comments on the possibility of using these funds on a trail project in Sullivan County that has not been able to come to fruition. Justin Batiuk is not entirely aware of the project Bob Getz is referring to, but discusses the opportunities for funding for the project. Matt Williams expresses that it is not a funding issue for the trail project, but rather a planning issue with the game commission and working out the design of the trail. Dean Roberts expresses that this is a completely new funding source and that it is federal funding so the Districts need to follow federal regulations. The Greenway project has received federal funding in the past so it already follows those regulations. Matt Williams expresses that Bob Getz's main point is that while Bradford and Sullivan County do not have projects for this funding source now, both him and Bob Getz expect Tioga County's support if Bradford or Sullivan County were to present a project for the funding source. Jean Ruhf asks if the motion was made for both federal fiscal years of 2023 and 2024. Matt Williams believes that the motion was for both years, and he supports that idea in order to keep pedestrians safe while trying to use the trail. Brian Baker asks if there are any more comments or questions under the motion. Hearing none, the committee voted on the motion to accept the Marsh Creek Greenway as the PennDOT District 3.0 project for carbon reduction funds, and the motion passed unanimously.

Matt Williams asks if there is a risk of District 4.0 losing the funding. Steve Fisher believes they can obligate backwards, if necessary, he would just need an eligible project from Susquehanna County or Wyoming County to obligate the funds to. Justin Batiuk comments that the funds would need to be obligated to the project before the TIP rolls over to the next one. Dean Roberts agrees and explains that it does not leave the RPO much time left to dedicate those funds. Brian Baker acknowledges the time constraint; however, it may be possible for District 4.0 to find an eligible project for the 2024 round of the carbon reduction funds. Bob Getz asks how much funding is going to be available for District 3.0 in 2025 and 2026 federal fiscal years. Justin Batiuk comments that in 2025 the amount goes up to \$758,000 and \$778,000 in 2026. Brian Baker explains to the committee that now would be the time to start searching for eligible projects to put this funding towards. Steve Fisher comments that this is the reason why there are efforts for a statewide plan for this funding source as finding eligible projects is a wide spread issue the state is facing. Alan Hall asks if there is any documentation available regarding this funding source that he could review, and Dean Roberts says yes. Jean Ruhf explains that Wyoming County has a portion of the Gravel Bikepacking Loop which travels through four counties: Bradford, Sullivan, Susquehanna, and Wyoming County. Vanessa Shamberg offers to send a link to the carbon reduction program over to Brian Baker so he can share it with the committee. Vanessa Shamberg comments that she has seen many other districts use the funding for lighting projects as a way to quickly dedicate the funds, and that projects eligible for CMAQ funding are generally eligible for carbon reduction funds. Matt Williams asks what is meant by lighting projects, and Vanessa explains that the projects include street lighting and traffic control devices by replacing the lights with new energy efficient LEDs. Matt Williams comments that that would be a good idea for our region if the municipalities would be on board as they would receive a large return on investment.

Dean Roberts comments that he has had issues with this funding source where the funding was flexed to transit for the time being. Dean Roberts asks Vanessa Shamberg if anyone has presented a trail project for these funds yet, and Vanessa Shamberg offered to ask around her office and report back on her findings. Vanessa suggests that the committee does not come up with their own carbon reduction plan due to the efforts already underway by the state, but rather focus on developing a priority system instead. Dean Roberts asks if the committee should use the statewide plan as a starting point for their priority system, and Vanessa Shamberg agrees that it would be a good place to start. Brian Baker asks if the Planning Partners would be sent a copy. Dean Roberts believes that it is for the public so Planning Partners should receive a copy.

E. LRTP Update

Brian Baker explains that, with the assistance of Brett Voloshin, the RPO has put together a scope of work document for the LRTP update, which has been shared with Dean Roberts. The next steps to follow are working with Dean Roberts to enlist the assistance of a consultant, and working with them to finalize the scope of work that the consultant will be doing for the LRTP update in order to meet the April 2025 deadline. Brian Baker asks Dean Roberts if there is anything on Central Office's end that Brian Baker still needed to complete. Dean Roberts comments that there is not anything else aside from sharing the finalized budget numbers from Northern Tier for hiring a consultant.

F. Local Bridge Subcommittee Update

Brian Baker reminds the committee about the last local bridge subcommittee meeting held last spring, and how the subcommittee members voted on Decision Lens. Brian Baker briefly reviews each of the criteria voted upon to the committee with "Impact to EMS" being the highest voted criteria. Brian Baker presents a draft point system that was developed with the assistance of Brett Voloshin for allocating points to each criterion in order to rank and prioritize bridges. Each criterion can have up to three points depending on the depth of the criteria. Brian Baker explains that the next steps in this process are to develop an excel spreadsheet to document the points allocated to the bridges and work with county, municipal, emergency service officials, or consultants to gather information on the bridges in order to rank them. Brian Baker mentions that bridge redundancy is still a criterion that the subcommittee is considering during this process.

G. Supplemental Funding Update: Marsh Creek, Tunkhannock Mobility

Marsh Creek Greenway Project: Mark Hamilton does not know of any topics to present at this time. He opens the discussion for any questions if applicable.

Tunkhannock Mobility: No members were present at this time to provide an update.

H. LTAP

Brian Baker mentions that the RPO is planning to schedule LTAP classes for the fall season, with more information to come.

I. GIS Report

Brian Baker comments that there is nothing new to report for GIS usage aside from continuing to develop maps in house for grant writing assistance.

II. County & Agency Reports

A. Legislative Report

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

Chuck Dillon comments that there are no new updates to share at this time.

B. FHWA Report

Vanessa Shamberg offers to review some funding opportunities with the committee. With the new bill that was released, a new wave of discretionary grants and opportunities are now available. First is the PROTECT program, which the deadline for applications is approaching soon. The program focuses on resiliency projects to prevent flooding or similar situations that counties or municipalities can apply for. Next is the Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant program. This program focuses on larger multimodal projects with a designated rural set aside. The last prominent program mentioned is the Rural and Tribal Assistance Technical Pilot program, which is useful for assisting local communities in preparing projects for public funding consideration. Interested parties can apply for up to \$350,000 in technical assistance to hire additional staff or consultant support for these projects. Vanessa Shamberg quickly mentions the Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods grant program and the SMART Grants funding program. Vanessa Shamberg offers to share a link to these programs to Brian Baker so he can share it with the rest of the committee. Vanessa Shamber opens the discussion to any questions. Brett Voloshin asks if the Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant program is different than the PennDOT Multimodal or DCED Multimodal grant programs. Vanessa Shamberg explains that this program is different than the PennDOT or DCED programs.

C. PennDOT Reports

1. Central Office

Dean Roberts mentions that the Fall Planning Partners meeting will be held on October 4th and 5th this year. Brian Baker explains that Northern Tier RPO is on the planning team for this years Planning Partners meeting so he is aware of the dates.

2. District 3.0

Justin Batiuk does not have any topics to discuss at this time, but he is willing to take any questions at this time.

3. District 4.0

Steve Fisher does not have any topics to discuss at this time.

D. County Reports

Matt Williams explains for Bradford County that they are in final design for Bridge 38, and they are working closely with Aaron Crist on a pilot project for rehabilitating Bridge 13. Matt Williams briefly mentions that are still working on a couple maintenance bundles within the County.

Sullivan County representatives do not have anything substantial to discuss at this time.

Jean Ruhf with Wyoming County comments that David Landis, who is a consultant and cyclist from Virginia, recently road the Gravel Bikepacking Loop and will provide a report on his experiences and suggest some potential changes. Brett Voloshin comments that, due to working on the web maps of the route, he saw that over 300 different individuals have viewed the route online.

Susquehanna County representatives did not discuss any topics at this time.

Mark Hamilton mentions that Tioga County will be undergoing reassessment hearing starting today and running until October 30th.

E. BeST Report

Mark Hamilton reports that BeST is still recovering from the pandemic in terms of ridership, but the numbers are beginning to reach around where they were before Covid. Mark Hamilton asks District 3.0 to consider BeST for the carbon reduction fund program for the next federal fiscal year.

F. BMTS Report

Brian Baker mentions that, after the last US Census, BMTS no longer has jurisdiction down Interstate 81 in Susquehanna County. Therefore, BMTS will no longer be attending the RTAC meetings as they will no longer have any impact on the region.

G. NTRPDC Report

Frank Thompson encourages the committee to include Kim Jennings on any future discussions of projects that could benefit from grant writing assistance. Kim Jennings is the new grant writing assistant working with NTRPDC and is available to help municipalities with grant applications. The local share funding opportunity for municipalities opens September 1st and is available through November. Brett Voloshin mentions that the Tioga/Bradford Equipment Show will be hosted on August 24th this year at the Alparon Park in Troy. Frank Thompson also mentions that NTRPDC is hosting a internal controls training for non-profit businesses on September 26th.

III. Other Items For Discussion

No other items were discussed at this time.

IV. Public Discussion

No public discussions were held at this time.

V. Adjournment & Next Scheduled Meeting

Brian Baker reminds the committee that the next RTAC meeting will be held on October 16th. Alan Hall makes the motion to adjourn the meeting, the motion was seconded by Matt Williams, and the motion was passed unanimously.