

**Countywide Advisory Team  
Meeting #5 Summary**

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The fifth meeting of the Countywide Planning Advisory Team (PAT) for *Cultivating Community: A Plan for Union County's Future* was held on Thursday, March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008 at the Mifflinburg High School LGI Room.

**I. Welcome & Introductions**

The meeting was called to order by Shawn McLaughlin of the Union County Planning Commission at 7:00 PM. Chris Williams and Niki Kline with McMahon Transportation Associates introduced themselves to the committee.

**II. Public Forum # 2 Comments**

Mr. Rouse briefly discussed the second round of public forums that were held on March 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> in Mifflinburg, Lewisburg, and Laurelton. He said the turnout was very good with 250 people attending and the discussion and feedback was mostly positive in terms of the vision statement and recommended growth scenario. Mr. Kerns also was very pleased with the number of citizens that participated and was impressed with the number of attendees that had not been to the previous round of forums in November 2007. Mr. McLaughlin indicated that staff was in the process of compiling the results of the questionnaire from the meetings but on the face it appeared there was consensus emerging.

**III. Comprehensive Planning Timeline & Information**

Mr. Kerns referred to a handout (see attached) showing the remaining PAT meeting schedule for the year and reminded the PAT that the meetings will now shift to every other month with the next meeting in May followed by July and then September. The goal is to have the draft plan prepared by December and public presentation of it in January 2009. Over the next several months the consultant team will be preparing the various chapters and elements to build the actual plan document. Mr. Kerns also reviewed the outline of the plan contents and said chapters will be released to the PAT as they are completed for review. Mr. Kerns also said the team will be meeting with the municipal officials again in July and perhaps again after that since the townships and boroughs are key stakeholders in the process.

**IV. Fall Educational Meeting**

Mr. Rouse informed the PAT that the consultant team is working with the county staff to organize a fall educational program in order to keep the project visible to the public. Mr. Rouse said the purpose of the event would be similar to the kickoff where there would be an expert or panel of experts brought in to speak on planning issues. He said that while Tom Hylton was good at the kickoff event in terms of getting people motivated and encouraging involvement, for this session we may want to focus on how to get things done and certain implementation methods. He said on a project in Chapel Hill, NC they put together a panel of experts from similar sized communities around the country that had expertise on related issues. The committee was encouraged to forward suggestions to Mr. McLaughlin regarding the format, content, and possible presenters. One name that was mentioned was Ron Bailey who is currently the Director of the Chester County Planning Department and is on the State Planning Board. Mr. Bailey was formerly the Lancaster County Planning Director so he was one of the first in the state to experiment with implementing growth areas.

## V. Review Existing Conditions Report

Mr. Kerns and Mr. Rouse next led the PAT through a review and discussion of the Existing Conditions Report. Mr. Rouse indicated that they wanted to focus on bigger issues related to content at the meeting due to time constraints and they would ask that minor comments be forwarded to Mr. McLaughlin and Mr. Del Vecchio.

Ms. Hagenbaugh asked about how SEDA-COG's Valley Vision 2020 Plan was connected to the county and multi-municipal plans and what the status of that initiative was. Is it finished, what were its recommendations, etc.? She was not sure that it needed to be mentioned on the first page of the report. Mr. Rouse said it was a larger regional planning process involving all the counties in the SEDA-COG region but he was not aware of whether or not it was finished or what the outcomes were. He said it was something they were made aware of early on when they started the county plan and they wanted to maintain consistency with as much other ongoing planning in the region as possible. Mr. McLaughlin said that he was not aware of Valley Vision 2020 being completed because of staff turnover at SEDA-COG. Mr. Kerns said they would attempt to contact SEDA-COG to get an update and would reassess the wording and its location within the Existing Conditions Report.

There was a discussion about the prison inmates skewing the data for the Kelly Township and the county with regard to race and education. PAT members asked if the impacts of the inmates could be more clearly illustrated. Mr. Hovey suggested that perhaps a simple table would suffice that showed the various group quarters population. Mr. Kerns and Mr. McLaughlin said they would do additional research to determine if they could obtain more specific data regarding the prison population.

Mr. Bowman asked whether the commuter patterns reported were good, bad, or indifferent. Mr. Rouse and Mr. Kerns noted that it is not necessarily good or bad but having a high percentage of people commuting out of the county could be a sign that there is an imbalance in the number of jobs available in the county compared to the workforce. It would also mean that the county not having those employers would mean the governments would be missing out on those tax revenues. There are also sustainability factors related to commuting due to energy costs and environmental impacts of people driving greater distances. Mr. Hostetler indicated that about 400 medical professionals that work for Geisinger Health Systems in Danville but live in Union County.

Mr. Kling stated map 3-5 on page 26 was difficult to read. He was not able to determine the difference between the yellow shaded polygons and the blue boxes. Mr. Kerns said that all those features were to be polygons outlined in blue with a yellow fill but the line weight around the parcels was too thick. The map would be adjusted for improved readability.

Mr. Fetterman noted that the Union County Public Library and the Bertrand Library at Bucknell University are technically in East Buffalo Township and not Lewisburg Borough.

Mr. Erdley stated that the descriptions of the police and fire services were misleading. For example he said Lewisburg Fire Department has paid staff but only two positions are paid, not an entire crew, which makes the paid factor a mute point. He also felt that it might be more beneficial to the public if the police information was reported based on the average number of officers that might be on duty at one time rather than only listing the number of full-time and part-time officers.

It was recommended that the title for table 3.7 on Page 48 include "Un-signalized Intersections" for clarity.

## VI. Transportation Assessment

Chris Williams and Nike Kline from McMahon Transportation Associates explained what their company has been working on as a sub consultant for the project. They said the majority of their time has been spent on collecting and reviewing existing information such as traffic studies that were completed for recent developments or by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PENNDOT) and reviewing field conditions in the county. They have obtained information from and met with PENNDOT officials and the SEDA-COG RPO staff.

Ms. Kline distributed a handout (see attached) that summarized some of the main observations made by McMahon to date. The document listed the following:

- Major inter-county corridors
- Other significant transportation corridors
- Roadway classifications – (these were explained to the PAT)
- Existing traffic generators and destinations
- Existing Levels of Service (Level of Service criteria was explained to the PAT)
- Key Intersections (2<sup>nd</sup> McMahon handout-see attached)
- Crash locations
- Existing Deficiencies
- Central Susquehanna Valley Thruway
- Public Transit

Mr. Williams said the scope of work includes looking at 20 key intersections in the county in detail where traffic counts would be conducted. These would be the worst of the worst. He said up to 20 additional intersections could be reviewed and examined but it would not be at the same level of detail. The PAT was asked to review and comment on the proposed list of these 20 intersections that was prepared by McMahon based on field observations, review of existing data, and discussions with PENNDOT. Mr. Williams said some intersections that are bad may not appear on the list because there was recently a detailed study done or there is one in progress by another entity such as PENNDOT (i.e. US 15 and 4<sup>th</sup> Street).

Mr. Williams explained that part of McMahon's task is to evaluate the existing transportation conditions and then once WRT has a future land use map they will take the future scenario and project what the transportation impacts will be based on the preferred land use and growth alternative. This will then give the community an idea of where infrastructure improvements will be needed. He noted that this does not mean that all the recommendations will be for adding highway capacity. He said there are cases where problems could be solved through altering traffic signal timing, improving pedestrian and non-motorized transportation options, and the like.

Mr. Williams noted the next steps as follows:

- Finalizing the list of 20 intersections for more detailed study
- Completing the existing traffic conditions analysis to further identify system deficiencies
- Summarize crash data from PENNDOT and map high crash locations
- Obtain parking study data completed for Lewisburg and Mifflinburg Boroughs
- Project traffic volumes and conditions based on WRT's future land use scenarios
- Complete future conditions analysis to identify ability for roadways to accommodate growth
- Identify a future transportation improvement plan to accommodate future growth, including:
  - roadway and intersection capacity improvements
  - public and private transit services
  - multi-modal improvements including pedestrian and bicycle accommodations

Mr. Bowman stated that he felt there was a problem at the intersection of Route 45 and Mabel Street/Meadow Green in Mifflinburg where traffic volumes are heavy in the morning traffic east bound and west bound in the evening between 4:00 and 6:00 PM. Mr. Williams noted that those times corresponded with AM and PM peak traffic flows through the Mifflinburg area. He said they would look at that intersection again and noted that PENNDOT felt there were possibly some signal timing problems in Mifflinburg.

Ms. Hagenbaugh was concerned about what impacts the tolling of Interstate 80 might have on the county transportation system. Mr. Williams felt if it were to be approved it would have some impacts on the county but he along with Mr. Rouse and Mr. McLaughlin said that the I-80 toll plan has several hurdles to overcome before it could be implemented, including federal approval which is not likely. It is a big unknown at this point.

Ms. Hagenbaugh was also concerned about the safety for horse and buggy travel and what could be done to better accommodate them. Mr. Williams said that what PENNDOT tries to do is have wider shoulders on roads that are frequently used by horse and buggy; however, PENNDOT also takes criticism from the public regarding these types of improvements because they are intended for people that do not pay gas tax. He said given funding constraints and the backlog of transportation projects it is not feasible to widen the shoulders on all the roads, plus it would have other negative impacts such as increased stormwater runoff. Mr. Kerns suggested that since it would be unfeasible to widen every road that the county, PENNDOT, and the municipalities should focus on the conflict points where there are serious problems. He said that a meeting with Mennonite representatives could likely identify these locations.

A question was asked regarding the Central Susquehanna Valley Transportation project and whether or not the information on the handout referring to the let date for the river bridge construction was public or insider knowledge. Mr. Williams indicated that the Spring 2009 let date is public information taken from the project website but PENNDOT officials have indicated that the date will likely be moved back due to funding constraints.

## **VII. Natural, Historic, & Recreational Resources Mapping**

Mr. Kerns noted that the natural, historic and recreational resource mapping was underway and that draft maps were posted to the project website. The maps were also on display and he encouraged PAT members to take a look at them. He said the plan elements that will be addressed next relate to this mapping and will be reviewed at the May PAT meeting.

## **VIII. Adjournment**

Mr. McLaughlin announced that the next meeting would be on May 8<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM at the Mifflinburg High School LGI Room unless otherwise noted on the agenda when it is distributed. With no further business the meeting adjourned.