



Plan Purpose and Preparation

Purpose

This Long-Range Transportation Plan aims to guide the development, maintenance, and operation of an efficient transportation system across Cambria County. This plan includes an analysis of the County, its transportation needs, and proposed projects and planning activities to maintain, improve, and, where appropriate, expand the region's transportation system. The plan promotes mobility that is aligned with the county's community and economic development goals and has been developed in accordance with the current federal transportation legislation, Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, enacted in December 2015.

The Johnstown Area Transportation Study serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Cambria County, and is responsible for its long-range transportation planning. The Cambria County Planning Commission provides staff to manage long-range transportation planning activities and serves as the MPO's Policy Board. The Commission and its staff works closely with partners at all levels of government to identify issues and seek solutions for the multimodal transportation system. Through a Memorandum of Understanding, Somerset County provides transportation planning services for the adjacent urbanized portions of northern Somerset County.

Federal planning requirements for Metropolitan Planning Organizations require that the Commission work with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation's (PennDOT's) Central Office and its local engineering district, 9-0, as well as the Federal Highway Administration to fulfill its long-range planning requirements. The Commission works in collaboration with representatives from county government (elected officials), transit authorities, aviation, rail and trail organizations, business, and industry. The Commission convenes as the MPO's Policy Board quarterly throughout the calendar year.

The long-range transportation planning process considers the near- and longer-term transportation needs of the county or region, prioritizes projects by need, and aligns them with projections of available funding. The plan is updated approximately every four years to ensure that transportation investment policies and projects remain responsive and directive to the region's needs and in compliance with current state and federal policy. The prioritized short-range projects are programmed in a four-year cycle known as the Transportation Improvement Program and are revisited every two years.

Preparation

The long-range transportation plan was developed with input from the Commission, transportation stakeholders, the public, and in coordination with PennDOT's Central Office, Engineering District 9-0, and the Federal Highway Administration.

Coordination with State and Federal Transportation Planning

Since the 2011–2040 long-range transportation plan was prepared, a number of state initiatives have influenced transportation planning practices in Pennsylvania:

- PennDOT has continued to emphasize Asset Management tools to preserve and extend the life cycles of its facilities.
- PennDOT has implemented Linking Planning and NEPA, its protocol for early coordination on avoidance and mitigation of potential environmental impacts.
- PennDOT introduced Performance-based Planning as a means to measure the condition and trend of various aspects of the transportation system, including asset conditions, safety, and funding, among others.
- Pennsylvania's Legislature and Governor Corbett passed Act 89 of 2013, which increased state and local funding for the transportation system in light of deteriorating statewide infrastructure conditions.
- Act 89 of 2013 also enabled Green Light-Go, Pennsylvania's Municipal Signal Partnership Program, which provides state funds for the operation and maintenance of traffic signals along critical and designated corridors on state highways.
- To address one of the most concerning asset conditions, PennDOT has continued to emphasize the reduction of structurally deficient bridges through its project selection and prioritization guidance.

The previous federal transportation legislation, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21), evolved transportation funding policy in several ways.

- MAP-21 consolidated funding programs;
- instituted a performance-based program focused on safety improvement, which PennDOT had been anticipating for several years;
- reformed the environmental review process;

- reduced dedicated bicycle and pedestrian funding, but made them eligible for funding through the Transportation Alternatives Program; and
- called for a national freight policy and incentivized state-level freight planning.

Current federal transportation policy, Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, continues the refinement of federal policy and funding programs in support of:

- FAST Act emphasizes freight planning with two new programs—the National Highway Freight Program (NHFP) and the Nationally Significant Freight and Highway Projects (NSFHP) program; and
- establishes a new focus on elements such as system resiliency and reliability, travel and tourism, and streamlining the project delivery process.

Local Perspectives on Transportation Needs and Priorities

The Commission appointed a Steering Committee to guide the development of the transportation plan through a series of discussions about stakeholders and their transportation needs, goals, and priorities.

In Spring 2015, the Commission invited transportation stakeholders – including county officials and agencies, municipal officials and roadmasters, and public and private transportation service operators – to discuss transportation conditions and needs and transportation’s support of community and economic development. Five sessions were conducted in late April and May 2015.

The Commission then hosted an online public survey of transportation needs from mid-July to mid-August 2015.

Themes among outreach discussions included these transportation concerns:

- **Need for better transit connections between major community hubs**, e.g. between the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown in Richland and downtown Johnstown as well as major employers, employment training sites, and public service offices. Need for increased frequency and evening and weekend hours were also noted.
- **Need for better sidewalks, crosswalks, and pedestrian signals** for pedestrians and transit riders in urban areas.
- **Interest in more bicycle and pedestrian trails and interconnection of existing trails** as a regional system.
- **Declining air passenger services** at the John Murtha Johnstown–Cambria County Airport amid strong competition from nearby airports such as those in Latrobe or State College, or larger airports in Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, or Baltimore.
- **Lack of commuter (one-day roundtrip) passenger rail service to Pittsburgh**; current service supports occasional business and leisure travel but does not support effective economic development connections to the Pittsburgh area.

The Commission appointed a Steering Committee, invited transportation stakeholders, and provided opportunities for the public to give input to the long-range transportation plan.

- **Poor highway access north to I-80** – US 219 from Carrolltown north to DuBois and Interstate 80 is a 60-mile, two-lane rural highway.
- **Desired interstate status for US-219** – US 219 from Carrolltown to Johnstown to Meyersdale, Somerset County has been built as a four-lane limited access highway. The segment from Meyersdale south to Interstate 68 in Maryland is a two-lane highway under [joint study by PennDOT and Maryland’s Department of Transportation](#) to determine if a four-lane alignment can be segmented into reasonable discrete projects that could be advanced as funding becomes available. A report is expected in July 16.
- **Poor east-west highway access for the Johnstown area** – PA Route 56 is the primary highway access to and from Johnstown: 8 miles northwest to US 22 and 30 miles southeast to US 220 (35 miles from the Bedford Exit of I-76/PA Turnpike). Outside of the Johnstown area, the route winds through the West End of the City then parallels the Conemaugh River to the west and traverses two valleys and Pleasantville Mountain, including the hairpin Peggy Westover Curve, to the east. Only between US 219 on the east side of the City and downtown is Route 56 a limited access freeway, known as the Johnstown Expressway. Heavy volumes of truck traffic make this route dangerous for travelers.

In total, approximately 175 people participated in these discussions of transportation conditions and needs and transportation’s support of community and economic development. Comments made by participants are noted in Chapters 2 and 3.

Review and Adoption

After the draft plan was assembled, it was made available for public review at the Commission office in Ebensburg, the County Courthouse in Ebensburg, and on the Commission website, <https://cambriaplanning.org/>. Additional copies were made available upon request.

The Commission hosted a public meeting on July 14, 2016 to hear public comments on the draft plan.

The 2015-2040 long-range transportation plan was formally adopted by the Commission on August 11, 2016.