

INTRODUCTION

Transportation planning serves a critical function in Cambria County, from individual and personal mobility to wide ranging participation in the global economy. From its origins in the mid 1900's, the metropolitan planning process (practiced locally under the Cambria County Metropolitan Planning Organization) evolved into a coalition of local stakeholders and organizations who now work collaboratively, comprehensively and collectively with PennDot to best deploy transportation resources. Funding for most transportation projects in Cambria County comes from state and federal sources. However, that funding is legally required to be vetted and programmed through the local transportation planning process. One of the primary missions of the Cambria County Planning Commission in its partnership with PennDot is to administer the transportation planning process in a fair and equitable manner that is responsive to safety, public health, economic development, cultural and environmental goals and objectives.

Public participation is an essential ingredient in the transportation planning process. The Cambria County Planning Commission and Cambria County MPO work together to ensure projects, meetings and plans coalesce around a strong foundation of public participation and input. Organizationally, the Cambria County MPO is comprised of two committees with representation from municipal, business, transit and public recreation spheres. The composition of the MPO committees is specifically calibrated to provide a wide array of input on transportation needs from local residents.

Local input is the key to successful planning, and ultimately, transportation projects that improve quality of life, our economies, safety and convenience of the traveling public. The Cambria County Planning Commission and MPO solicit feedback through in person meetings, planning processes, online engagements, surveys and data collection efforts.

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 Cambria County MPO 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, 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 state and county government, transit authorities, aviation, rail, recreation organizations, business, and industry.

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 (TIP) and are revisited every two years.

LOCAL PERSPECTIVES ON TRANSPORTATION NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

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

In Spring 2020, the Commission invited transportation stakeholders – including county officials and agencies, transit representatives, 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.

The Commission then hosted an online public survey of transportation needs from mid-January to mid-March 2020. In total, approximately 350 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.

Themes among outreach discussions included these transportation concerns:

- **Investment to Maintain Major Transportation Hubs.** The Johnstown Incline Plane, Johnstown Train Station and CamTran Transit Center all are in need of major investments to continue the viability of these key community assets.

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

- **Need for Enhanced Pedestrian Infrastructure.** Most municipalities in Cambria County have unsafe, unsightly and dysfunctional pedestrian infrastructure. The Borough of Ebensburg stands as an example of a municipality that has successfully planned for a viable pedestrian network.
- **More Mileage for Bicycle and Trail Infrastructure.** The PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources named the Ghost Town Trail its 2020 Trail of the Year. The trail network in Cambria County is second to none. Continued investments and interconnections of the trail systems improve public health and quality of life, as well as business attraction and retention efforts.
- **Better Transit Connections Between Major Community Hubs.** For example, 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. This is a challenging goal as businesses and employers can change locations and hours frequently. Identification of residential, commercial and employment clusters is key.
- **Additional Passenger Rail Service Between Pittsburgh and Harrisburg.** Currently one daily Amtrak train provides service to Pittsburgh and Harrisburg. The current service supports occasional business and leisure travel but does not support effective economic development connections to the Pittsburgh area. Local stakeholders, elected officials and the business community have voiced strong support for additional passenger train service.
- **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 difficult for travelers.
- **Interstate Access Remains Limited.** US 219 from Carrolltown north to DuBois and Interstate 80 is a 60-mile, two-lane rural highway.

REVIEW AND ADOPTION

After the draft plan was assembled, it was made available for public review at the Planning Commission office in Ebensburg, the County Courthouse in Ebensburg, and on the Commission website, <https://cambriaplanning.org/>. Staff and stakeholders

also presented the plan for review on social media outlets. Additional hard copies were made available upon request.

The Commission hosted a public meeting on , 2020 to hear public comments on the draft plan.

The 2019-2044 long-range transportation plan was formally adopted by the Cambria County Planning Commission on , 2020. The Cambria County MPO adopted the plan on , 2020.