

## THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC OUTREACH

To assure that Cambria County's transportation system meets the needs of the general public, both living in and traveling through the county, seeking public input is an integral part of the planning process. The Cambria County Planning Commission collected feedback from the public through public meetings and an online survey. Through these efforts, the CCPC was able to gather input from more than 250 people from all over Cambria County.

This chapter will outline the methodology of these outreach strategies and the feedback that was received.

## ONLINE SURVEY

In mid-February 2020, CCPC staff framed a 13 question survey, designed to be distributed online. The purpose of this survey was to better understand the transportation habits of the general public and gain knowledge of specific problem areas in regards to pedestrian infrastructure, intersections, roadways and bridges.

The survey was distributed electronically through emails, the CCPC website and social media. Postcards containing a link to the survey were mailed to all municipalities in Cambria County and also distributed at various meetings. The survey was posted online on February 14<sup>th</sup> and was closed on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, yielding 186 responses. Members of the LRTP steering committee felt that the survey should be reopened for re-circulation through means outside of social media and it was re-opened on March 4<sup>th</sup>. The survey was closed permanently on March 17<sup>th</sup>, with a total of 245 responses. A summary of the responses can be found within the next several pages.

### *Help Shape the Transportation System in Cambria County!*

The Cambria County Planning Commission has begun updating the county's long range transportation plan. The purpose of the plan is to identify long-term strategies, goals and objectives for the county's transportation system, incorporating all transportation modes.

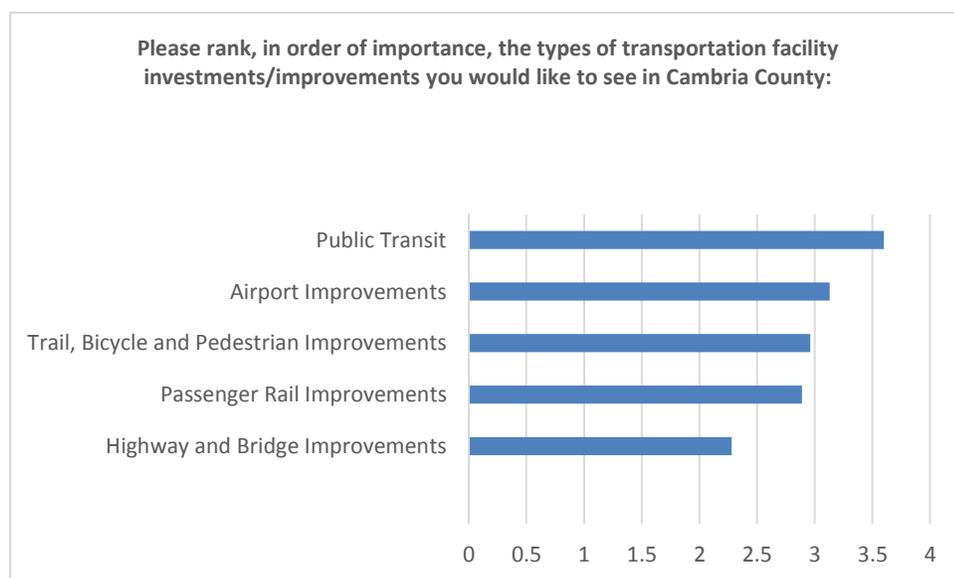
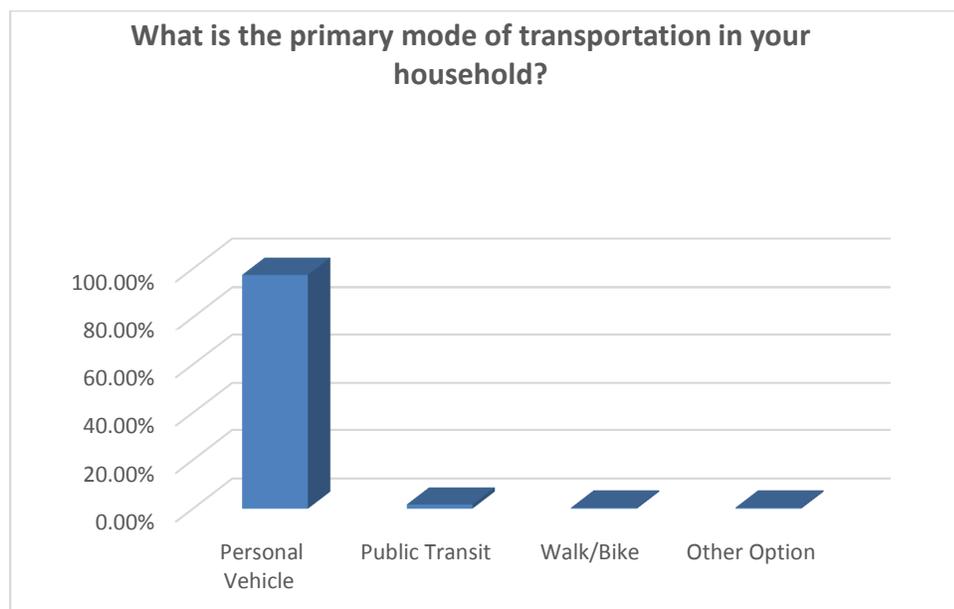
To measure the transportation needs throughout Cambria County, we have put together a short survey to assist us in identifying the priorities and concerns regarding the county's transportation facilities.

We invite you to take the online survey by visiting the following link or scanning the QR code with a mobile device. We also encourage you to share the survey with members of your community. The survey will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete and the responses will help shape the future of the transportation system in Cambria County.

<https://cambriaplanning.org/ltrpsurvey/>

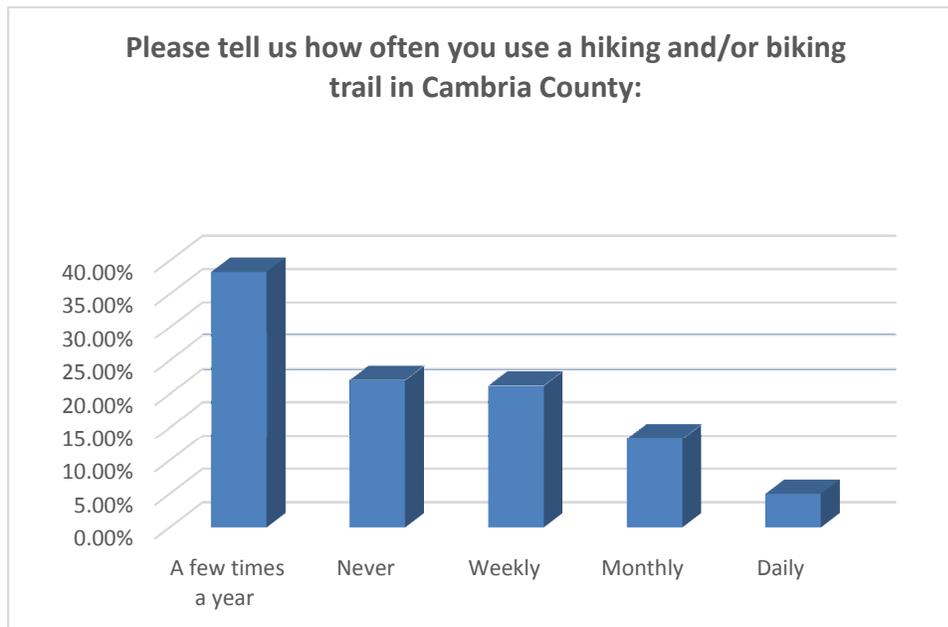


General Transportation Habits and Priorities



Nearly all survey participants (97%) use a personal vehicle as the primary mode of transportation in their household. Only 2% of participants use public transit and none primarily walk or bike. Due to this, it is unsurprising that highway and bridge improvements are the participants top concern and public transit their lowest (participants were asked to rank each choice with “1” being the most important and “5” being the least important). Passenger rail improvements also ranked high, which follows a pattern of increased interest in having more than one passenger train a day or commuter rail service.

## Bicycle and Pedestrian



The trails are well used in Cambria County, with 38% stating that they use the trails a few times a year, 22% using them weekly and 13% using them monthly. Very few people (5%) use the trail daily and 21% never use them. Given these patterns, we can assess that most trail users use the trails for leisure and very few, if any, use the trails as a means of transportation.

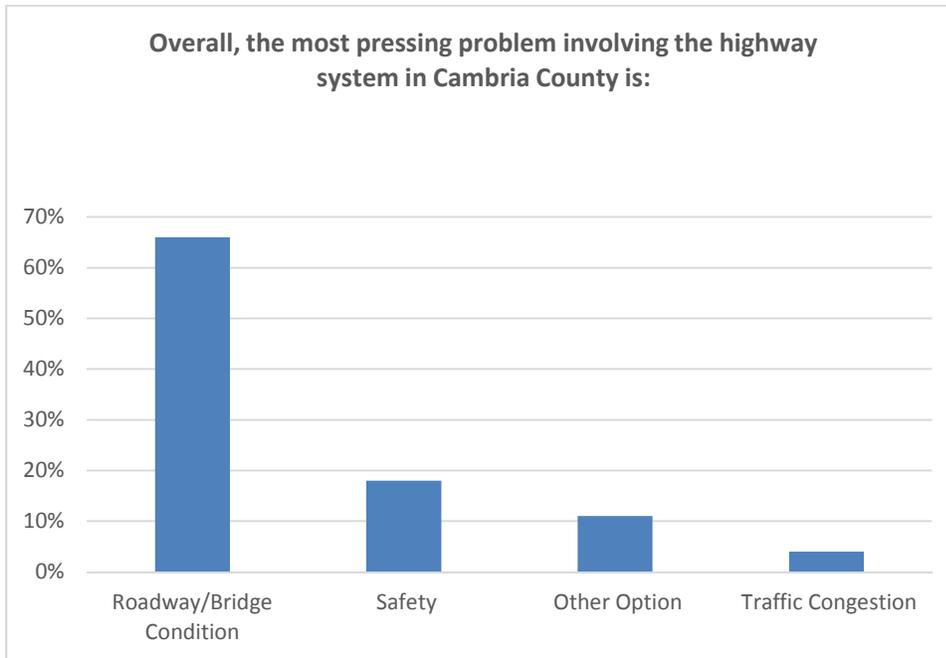
When asked about areas of concern regarding **pedestrian infrastructure**, we received a variety of responses, primarily with issues within the City of Johnstown and surrounding municipalities.

Noteworthy or recurring responses follow:

- The sidewalks within the central business district of the City of Johnstown are in poor condition, which causes safety issues for the elderly residents and people with disabilities who use the sidewalks to access goods and services.
- There are several areas within Richland Township that are in need of pedestrian enhancements, most notably crosswalks. These areas include Scalp Avenue where the Medwell and University Park plaza are located and on Theatre Drive, with a concentration on accessibility from the nearby education centers and apartment buildings.
- Several responses called for sidewalks connecting Upper Yoder and Lower Yoder Townships better with the Westwood area, notably sidewalks spanning the entire length of Goucher Street.
- Many people would also like to see a better bicycle and pedestrian connection between downtown Johnstown and the Cambria City neighborhood.

## Highway and Bridges

The next set of questions focus on highway and bridge infrastructure and both general and specific areas of concern.



The majority of respondents chose roadway and bridge condition as the top problem with the highway system in Cambria County. Only 4% of respondents cited traffic congestion as the biggest problem. Eleven percent chose “other” with a large majority of them calling for four lane highway access north and west of Cambria County. Other notable responses were suggestions for improvements to the “gateway” areas of the City of Johnstown and wider and smoother shoulders for bicyclists and pedestrians.

When prompted to explain specific areas of concern with highways, intersections and bridges, responses varied throughout the county. Noteworthy or repeated responses follow:

### Roadway:

- Congestion on US 22 in Cambria Township, particularly the area between the US 219 interchange and the Candlelight Drive intersection
- Safety concerns in the area of SR 56 and Strayer Street regarding large trucks having trouble navigating the “S” curve. Suggestions for a truck bypass were made

- Safety concerns with the railroad underpasses on SR 53 in Summerhill Borough and Portage Township. Respondents stated that they are difficult to navigate for coal trucks and drivers do not yield properly
- Safety concerns at the intersection of SR 219 and Sunset Road north of Carrolltown
- Lack of turning lanes on US 22 eastbound at Pike and Whitetail Roads and Fords Corner and Chickaree Hill Roads travelling westbound

There were also concerns about surface issues throughout Cambria County, many within the City of Johnstown as a result of the ongoing sewer replacement project.

### Intersections

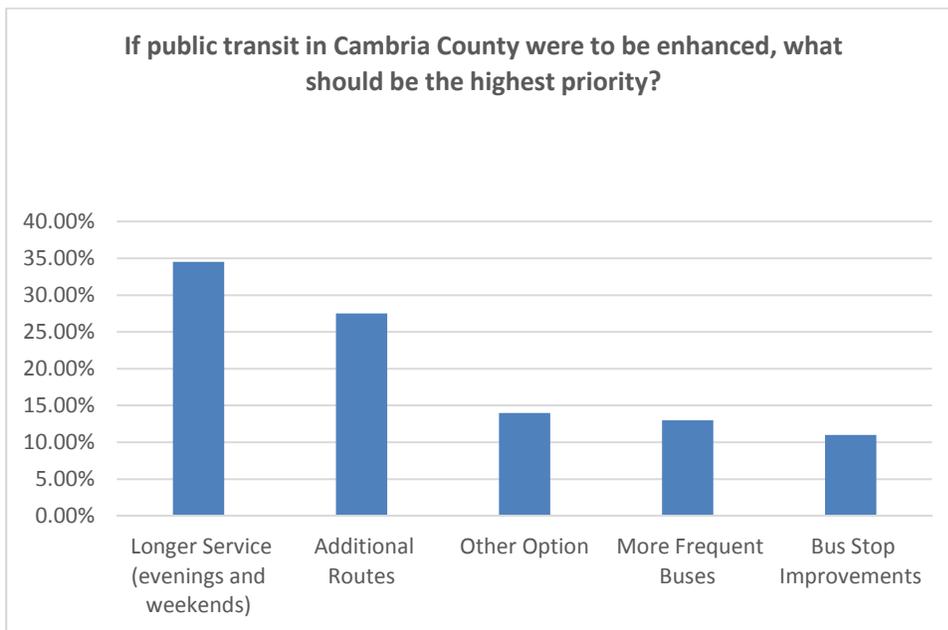
- Scalp Avenue and Eisenhower Boulevard in Richland Township
- Scalp Avenue, intersection at University Park Plaza and Medwell. Accident frequency due to drivers failing to stop at red lights, timing of red lights is “too long”
- Suggestions for a roundabout at the intersection of US 422 and High Street in Ebensburg to alleviate congestion
- Sight distance concerns at the intersection of Barnett Street and Southmont Boulevard in the Southmont Borough area
- Safety concerns on Bedford Street at Bentwood Street and Walters Avenue in Geistown Borough
- Congestion issues entering US 22 East from US 219 North in Cambria Township
- Sight distance issues at the intersection of Eckenrode Mill Road and Columbia Street in Allegheny Township
- Need for crosswalks at all major intersections along Scalp Avenue in Richland Township
- Safety concerns at the US 219 interchanges at Scalp Avenue in Richland Township
- Sight distance issues at the intersection of Elton Road and Vo-Tech Drive in Richland Township
- Safety concerns at the intersection of Frankstown Road and Adams Street in the City of Johnstown

- Sight distance issues at Lemon Drop Road and Plank Road (SR 219 N)

**Bridges**

- Hinkston Run Bridge, near Hinkston Run Reservoir in East Taylor Township
- Maple Avenue Bridge in Northern Cambria Borough
- Jamestown Road Bridge in Portage Township
- Red Mill Bridge in Blacklick Township
- Bridge over Laurel Avenue in the City of Johnstown
- Franklin Street Bridge in the City of Johnstown

**Public Transit**



When asked people to choose highest need in regards to public transit in Cambria County, longer service accounted for 34.5% of responses and additional routes had 27.5% of the responses. This aligns with responses from previous surveys. Fourteen percent responded with “other option” notable “other” responses include enhanced rural service, additional shelters, more flexible reserve-a-ride options for senior citizens and a transit smart phone application.

## PUBLIC MEETINGS

The Cambria County Planning Commission hosted two public meetings to gather feedback about the transportation system from the general public. The meetings were held on February 26, 2020 in Patton Borough and February 27, 2020 in the City of Johnstown, giving people from both the northern and southern regions of Cambria County an opportunity to attend. The meetings were advertised through print and television media, the CCPC website and social media.

A general summary of the feedback received at the meetings follow:

### Public Transit:

- There was a suggestion for additional public transit service in the rural areas of Cambria County
- There was a suggestion to review rural service routes, simplify some of them, make them easier for riders to understand, and better promote them
- It was suggested that a study be done on rural public transit in the county
- There was a question about establishing commuter bus service to Pittsburgh. CCPC staff noted that this was being looked into a little over a year ago, but has not heard anything recently. There was a comment that the Megabus travels from Pittsburgh along US Route 22, and a suggestion to add a stop where PA Route 403 intersects Route 22. CCPC staff noted that location was in Indiana County, but said they would follow-up on the possibility.
- There was a suggestion to add shelters at bus stops throughout the CamTran system
- There was a suggestion to add bus pull-offs at stops along William Penn Avenue
- There was a suggestion to look into establishing a park-and-ride lot at the Conemaugh hospital employee lot along Menoher Blvd. The hospital is no longer using the lot, and there are bus shelters already built there.

### Highway/Bridge

- There were concerns about safety on US 22 in Ebensburg, from the US 219 interchange and the Candlelight Drive intersection.
  - Suggestions to add additional signage
  - Suggestion to build a service road to separate local and through traffic
  - Suggestion to time traffic lights to a specific speed and post signs alerting motorists

**We Want to Hear from You!**

*As We Update the Cambria County Long Range Transportation Plan*

Highway and bridge maintenance are important, but so are bicycle and pedestrian safety, accessibility, and transit, rail, and air service enhancements. Our priorities for transportation projects should reflect our values for our communities and realistic growth for our economy.

**We invite you to help shape the transportation system in Cambria County.**

We have scheduled two meetings to give the public an opportunity to let us know your concerns about the transportation system in Cambria County. You will also have an opportunity to learn more about the plan and ask us questions. The meetings will be held on:

**February 26, 2020 at 5:00 PM-Patton Library, 444 Magee Avenue, Patton**

**February 27, 2020 at 5:00 PM-Greater Johnstown YMCA, 100 Haynes Street, Johnstown**

If you cannot make it to one of the meetings but still want to let us know your concerns, we have an online survey that can be accessed by visiting the following link or scanning the QR code.

<https://cambriaplanning.org/ltrpsurvey/>



SCAN ME

**Your opinion matters** and is an integral piece in planning the future of Cambria County's transportation system. We hope to see you at the meetings!

- Suggestion to require trucks to use the right lane only. CCPC and PennDOT staff noted that this may not be feasible or legally allowable
- There were concerns about heavy truck traffic along high street through Ebensburg
  - Suggestion to add a stop light at the US 219/US 422 interchange to make it easier for trucks to make left turns on and off of the highway ramps. CCPC and PennDOT staff noted that a signal would probably not be warranted in that location
  - Suggestion to look at a study on heavy truck traffic currently underway in Lewistown, PA, possibly conduct a similar study in Ebensburg
- There was a question about completion of US 219 South to Interstate 68. CCPC staff responded that Maryland is undertaking a project to rebuild the 219/68 interchange, but their project will stop at the state line. While PennDOT conducted a Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study a few years ago, no funding for design or construction for the project has been identified.
- There was a suggestion to designate US 219 as an interstate highway, with the idea that it would allow for additional federal funding investment
- There was a suggestion to widen Main Street to allow for better traffic flow and easier parking

### Bicycle/Pedestrian/Trails

- Establish more trails between towns; it isn't safe to ride a bicycle on-road in rural areas but if towns were connected by trails it could be done more safely
- Sidewalks and crosswalks within towns need improvements
- There was a discussion about closing Gazebo Place and/or Locust Street adjacent to Central Park in Johnstown. CCPC staff responded that the businesses on Gazebo Place opposed its closing, and CamTran opposed the Locust Street closing because they have a bus route through there
- There was a suggestion to study the relationship between expanding bicycle/pedestrian facilities and overall community health
- There was a suggestion to re-establish a crosswalk on Franklin Street before the bridge, in front of the medical technology center
- There was a suggestion to add a crosswalk on Franklin Street at the alley next to the church

### Passenger Rail

- There were questions regarding the status of efforts to expand Amtrak passenger rail service through Johnstown. CCPC staff gave an update on a study underway to determine costs for adding an additional Amtrak train, and what infrastructure improvements may be necessary. They also noted that a previous study on commuter rail service between Altoona and Pittsburgh concluded that such service would not be cost effective
- There was a suggestion to add an Amtrak stop in Cresson; it was noted that there is a stop in Tyrone currently
- There was a suggestion to improve access at the Johnstown station platform for persons with disabilities; investigate a wooden platform with stairs so that passengers could step on and off the train at floor height

## PUBLIC INPUT SUMMARY

- Most residents use a personal vehicle for transportation
- The off-road trail system in Cambria County is well used, but seems mostly for leisure. There is a need for trail connections to be made, specifically in the northern and rural regions of the county to provide a safe connection to travel from one point to another
- People would like to see downtown Johnstown become more bicycle and pedestrian friendly. This includes safety enhancements for the elderly and people with disabilities
- People want bike lanes in the City of Johnstown
- The retail areas in Richland Township are in need of enhanced pedestrian infrastructure and improved intersections
- US 22 through Cambria Township, specifically from the US 219 interchange to the Candlelight Light Drive intersection has safety and congestion issues
- The intersection of SR 219 N and Sunset Road north of Carrolltown is confusing and unsafe
- Transit service could benefit from longer service hours, additional routes, increased rural routes and more bus shelters
- There is a demand for enhanced and more frequent passenger rail service

Please note, some of the concerns listed that we received feedback on during the public outreach efforts are addressed in the project list section of the plan, found in Appendix A.

Transit needs and opportunities, ridership data and projects can be found in Chapter 5 and Appendix C of this plan.

## ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE (EJ) CORE ELEMENTS ANALYSIS

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) recently introduced the Environmental Justice Core Elements Methodology to ensure an MPO/RPO can meaningfully assess the benefits and burdens of plans and programs. PennDOT and the Johnstown MPO are committed to following the Core Elements approach, which includes:

- Avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority populations and low-income populations.
- Ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process.
- Prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority populations and low-income populations.

By integrating the Core Elements into the planning process, state and local agencies are better equipped to carry out the investment strategy and project selection. The EJ process should be comprehensive and continuous with each task informing and cycling back to influence the next step.

To accomplish this task, the Cambria County Planning Commission partnered with consultants from Michael Baker International to conduct an in-depth EJ analysis. The results of this analysis are included in their entirety in Appendix E.

### **LRTP DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE**

The following gives a general summary of the major milestones throughout the development of the LRTP:

- April 17, 2019: Cambria County Planning Commission, FHWA, PennDOT Central Office and PennDOT District 9-0 staff met to discuss LRTP guidance and requirements.
- July 30, 2019: Cambria County Planning Commission met with PennDOT Central Office and District 9-0 staff to further discuss LRTP guidance and requirements. A schedule and framework for the LRTP update was drafted
- October 30, 2019: A kick-off meeting of the LRTP Steering Committee was held. The plan framework and schedule were reviewed, and a strategy for public involvement was devised.
- November 10, 2019: The Cambria County Planning Commission Executive Director and Transportation Planner recorded an episode of the Alleghenies Ahead Podcast in which the transportation planning process, including the LRTP update, was discussed. The podcast episode was released on all popular streaming platforms in December, 2019, and was promoted on the Planning Commission's website and social media platforms.
- January 15, 2020: Cambria County Planning Commission, PennDOT Central Office, and PennDOT District 9-0 staff held a conference call to discuss the progress of the LRTP.
- January 29, 2020: A Cambria County MPO Technical and Coordinating Committee meeting was held in which the Cambria County Transportation Planner gave a presentation on the progress of the LRTP.

- January – February, 2020: An initial round of public outreach was conducted, the goal of which was to gather input on the needs, goals, objectives, and priorities for the plan. An online survey was conducted which produced over three hundred responses. Additionally, in-person public meetings were held in Patton, PA on February 26, 2020 and in Johnstown, PA on February 27, 2020. A total of approximately fifteen (15) members of the public attended the meetings. All of these public involvement activities were promoted on the Planning Commission’s website and social media pages, as well as through email and via a notice in the Johnstown Tribune Democrat newspaper.
- March 4, 2020: A meeting of the LRTP Steering Committee was held. Discussion included goals and objectives for the plan, as well as a review of the public input received.
- March – April, 2020: Updates to the narrative sections of the LRTP, as well as the financial plan and project list were completed by Cambria County Planning Commission staff.
- April 29, 2020: Cambria County Planning Commission, PennDOT Central Office, PennDOT District 9-0, and FHWA staff held a conference call to discuss the progress of the LRTP, and final steps toward completing the plan update.
- April 30, 2020: The draft 2021-2045 LRTP project list and financial plan tables were forwarded to FHWA and PennDOT Central Office for review as well as air quality conformity analysis.
- May 5, 2020: An initial draft of the LRTP is made available for review by PennDOT, FHWA, and the Agency Coordination Committee members.
- May 22 – June 24, 2020: A draft of the 2021-2045 LRTP update, 2021 Transportation Program update draft, and related documents are made available for public review and comments. Copies of the TIP documents are posted on the Planning Commission’s website. Letters and emails are sent to interested parties identified in the Cambria County MPO’s Public Participation Plan, and a notice is placed in the Johnstown Tribune Democrat indicating the public comment period dates, and date of the public meeting, as well as instructions on how to obtain the program update documents for review, how to provide comments, and how to participate in the public meeting. No comments were received.
- May 27, 2020: Cambria County Planning Commission staff present the 2021 LRTP update and environmental analysis at the Agency Coordination Meeting (ACM).
- June 3, 2020: A public meeting to review the 2021 LRTP update and 2021 Transportation Program Update documents and receive public input about the TIP will be held online and via conference call. Members of the public are invited to contact the Cambria County Planning Commission to receive instructions on how to participate in the meeting. No members of the public requested information for or participated in the meeting. Planning Commission Staff,

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PennDOT staff, and Cambria County Transit Authority staff convened the meeting and discussed the plan status and upcoming MPO meeting.

- June, 2020: All FHWA, PennDOT, ACM, and public comments are incorporated into the draft LRTP.
- June 24, 2020: The Cambria County MPO Technical and Coordinating Committees votes on approval of the 2021-2045 Cambria County Long Range Transportation Plan, 2021-2024 Highway and Bridge TIP, Public Transit TIP and related documents.