

Meeting Minutes

Huntingdon County Active Transportation Committee

Friday, March 22, 2024 @ 9:30AM

The following members were present at the meeting:

Matt Price, Laura White, Laurie Nearhood, George Conrad, Charles Harper, Brian Wisner, Zack Lee, Nathan Querry

Others in attendance included:

Ron Dively

I. Call to Order

Chairman Matt Price called the meeting to order at 9:43 A.M.

II. Review and Action on February 23, 2024, Meeting Minutes.

Matt asked the committee to review the February 23, 2024, meeting minutes for any additions or corrections to be made. George Conrade made a motion and Laura White seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

III. Committee Member Terms of Office

One individual submitted a volunteer form to be recommended to the County Commissioners. Matt Price introduced Nathan Querry, who is interested in enhancing outdoor recreation opportunities for Huntingdon County. A motion was made by Charles Harper to send a letter to the Commissioners to approve Nathan's volunteer application. George seconded the motion, and the motion was approved unanimously.

During the last meeting, the Committee began to establish terms of service and confirmed six of the members. Matt Price, George Conrad, and Laura White have agreed to two-year terms that would expire December 31, 2025. Judy Scott, Charles Harper, and Jane Sheffield have agreed to four-year terms expiring December 31, 2027. Members that have still been unassigned are Chris Stevens, Debra Clark-Loner, Wendy Melius, and Zack Lee. Matt asked Zack if he had any input on a two-year or four-year term. Zack stated that he may step away from the Committee due to other priorities, but that SAP&DC would be providing representation for any future Committee meetings. This could be SAP&DC's Transportation Program Manager or Transportation Planner. Matt went ahead and assigned a four-year term to Zack (SAP&DC). George and Brian Wisner began to discuss the potential of an organizational-membership, which would allow organizations to be more flexible in terms of

who they can send to meetings. The ex-officio (non-voting) members include Brian Wiser, Vince Greenland, and Laurie Nearhood.

IV. Subcommittee Reports

Judy Scott was not in attendance. No report for this meeting.

The subcommittee for the Trails Summit was mentioned as a possibility, but never occurred.

V. Huntingdon County Active Transportation Plan Priorities

In promoting the Plan, Brian presented it at the Mount Union Borough Council on March 6, 2024, and Matt presented it to the County Planning Commission annual meeting on March 8, 2024. Brian provided an update on Mount Union Borough. He spoke with the President of the Borough Council and presented the Plan at a previous meeting. Brian did not ask for their approval, but to just review the Plan. During the March meeting, Brian asked if the Plan would be on the agenda for consideration of adoption and it will be. He feels that the Borough is likely to approve the Plan and the Plan will be assigned to their Parks Committee. Brian will work with that committee to prioritize a plan to implement. The Borough will have to decide their priorities, but the options are: a portion of Segment 19 (Pennsylvania Avenue to Kissler Bridge to County-line), further development of the Bricktown Unity Trail, or a lifeway route. The priorities may depend on what funding sources are available. Judy Scott was not in attendance and was unable to give an update on presentations to township supervisors' meetings.

The next item was Main Line Canal Greenway/September 11th National Memorial Trail Corridor. Matt mentioned an action item for Segment 17A, which proposes to identify a trail owner that could acquire right-of-way or easements. Segment 17A is the fire trail and Segment 17B is the crossing at Route 22 to establish a pedestrian bridge across the old Dinky Bridge to connect to Segment 17A. This connection would be great, but the route would need to cross Route 22 (twice) and a river (twice). In addition, there's also other factors currently in place that would make this task very difficult to complete. Matt asked the Committee members for their thoughts on who could identify an eventual trail owner that could acquire right-of-way or easements. Brian asked if there was any movement on Huntingdon County forming an authority. The idea has been kicked around, but the County has not made any decisions. Brian added that it would need to be a functioning authority that would be tasked with oversight and maintenance of trails. This also means that this authority would need a dedicated funding source. This could potentially be DCNR or Act 13 funds. A county-wide authority would cut down on redundancy and would make the best use of the limited capacity within the County. Brian also added that granting agencies may look at this favorably to see that this authority is backed by the County, has made efforts to implement a plan, etc. Zack added that this method has been used in other counties within the region, specifically Somerset and Bedford/Fulton Counties. Bedford and Fulton created the Bedford

Fulton Joint Recreation Authority to be the “vehicle” for rolling-out projects and securing grant funding.

Brian asked if the bed tax goes to Matt’s organization (Huntingdon County Visitors Bureau). Matt stated that 96% of it goes to the Visitors Bureau by the state authorizing statute. Huntingdon County keeps the other 4%. This state law covers 56 out of the 67 Pennsylvania counties. This funding is the primary source of funding for the Visitors Bureau. Matt also added that the Visitors Bureau could potentially enter into an agreement to help fund an authority (or something similar). Brian asked Zack how many recreational-type authorities are found within SAP&DC’s region. Zack added that there’s not too many. The Bedford Fulton Joint Recreation Authority and the Somerset County Parks and Trails Director were provided as two examples. Brian also asked if the Somerset County staff person worked within the Planning Department. Zack responded by saying yes, and that this staff person also reported directly to the Somerset County Commissioners. They’re essentially the person that oversees all parks and trails projects within the County. Zack mentioned that there’s opportunities through grant funding to build-in administrative and personnel costs to support staff or whoever would be working on the project.

Matt also mentioned the opportunity for a Neighborhood Improvement District (NID) designation across multiple municipalities. NIDs are typically smaller geographies within a community, which is a district recognized by the government, and has to be a contiguous area. This is similar to programs like Keystone Opportunity Zones (KOZs) and Keystone Innovation Zones (KIZs). There’s also movement on a legislative proposal to do Tourism Improvement Districts, which do not have to be contiguous areas. A NID is a voluntary assessment in which individuals/businesses pay for services. For example, State College Downtown has a NID, and payments are made for sidewalk clearing, general maintenance, etc. It’s not a tax, but a voluntary assessment that is mandated. Laurie mentioned that there’s the JRBC, or Juniata River Blueprint Community, but they have limited capacity and don’t manage any funds. This group encompasses everything but Union and Brady Townships. Matt stated that these two municipalities may be the best places to reach out to initiate a conversation about a NID since they’re currently not served by the JRBC. Nathan asked about the Clearwater Conservancy as well. Matt responded by saying that, although located in State College, they can do projects outside of their zone. Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, Southern Alleghenies Conservancy, and Clearwater Conservancy all have projects within the County.

Matt proposed an action item to make a pitch at the next blueprint communities meeting. Laurie added that they had their meeting last Wednesday and that Alicia or Jen would know when their next meeting is. Laura asked if this group would even be capable of applying for different grants. Laurie responded by saying that they’re under offices of Center for Community Action and they’re a non-profit that would be eligible for most grant programs.

Matt is going to reach out to Wendy since her organization is the administrators of the Juniata River Blueprint Communities and to see if there's any opportunity for forming an authority.

The next action items were in regard to the Southern Alleghenies Regional Greenways Mini-Grant Program and potentially applying for two of the Main Line Canal Greenway Segments (Segment 1 and 19). The applications could be for planning, design, etc., as both segments are not ready for construction, but have been preliminarily-planned. Matt mentioned that Mount Union Borough Council is considering adopting the Plan at their April meeting. Matt asked Brian if he would be able to approach them about applying for a Mini-Grant. Brian responded by saying that he informally informed them about the program and that their Parks Committee needs to decide what they want to do. The Borough will also have to come up with a 50% match, which could be an issue. Brian further added that areas that are successful with moving projects forward contain high-levels of coordination between various groups. The other segment is Segment 1 in Porter Township. The sponsor for this application would likely be the Township, unless Central PA Rails-to-Trails wanted to do that. Matt asked the Committee if anyone would be interested in approaching either group about sponsoring an application. Matt will reach out to Judy Scott to see if she is willing to speak with Porter Township and Matt will also reach out to Central PA Rails-to-Trails.

The next action item was on Segment 13, which would be to reach out to Northeast Track Solutions to begin discussions with Norfolk Southern. Matt mentioned that Jane Sheffield is probably the best to do this, since she already has a relationship with them.

The next item on the agenda is Establish Connections to Centre, Bedford, Blair, and Mifflin Counties. Matt stated that Centre County is doing an active transportation plan. Laurie mentioned that Huntingdon County received notifications from the Centre County MPO asking for comments on the plan. Brian recommended that the Committee (or the County) provide input and reach out to the MPO to see if there's any opportunities for coordination or collaboration. It was suggested that both Huntingdon County and the Huntingdon County Active Transportation Committee submit two separate responses to Centre County.

The next item on the agenda is upcoming funding opportunities. Matt asked the Committee if there's any projects that are able to move forward with any of the grant funding opportunities.

VI. Huntingdon County Visitors Bureau Destination Excellence Awards Nominations:

Matt wanted to remind the Committee about the Visitors Bureau Destination Excellence Awards and potential nominations. Awards will be presented on April 23rd at the Visitors Bureau Tourism Summit. This Summit is open to the public. George also added that the Standing Stone Trail Club is hosting their annual spring meeting at the DCNR building.

VII. Set next meeting date and time

Friday, April 26, 2024, at 9:30 A.M. in the Huntingdon Borough Municipal Building – Borough Council Chambers, 530 Washington Street, Huntingdon, PA 16652

VIII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:06 A.M.