



MEMORANDUM of MEETING

Date: May 21, 2012

Date of Meeting: May 2, 2012

Time of Meeting: 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 PM

Meeting Location: North East Borough, PA

Meeting Description: Steering Committee #1

Work Order Number: 31874

Contract Number: 12012

Project: North East Borough Smart Transportation Initiative

CC: Participants; Lisa C. Murphy (WR&A); Ashley Tracy (WR&A); File

Participants:

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The Steering Committee (SC) meeting #1 for the North East Borough Smart Transportation Initiative was conducted to generally kick-off the project, introduce the SC members and consultant team, provide an overview of the anticipated project approach, and focus on key early actions for the SC's review and consideration. All current members of the Steering Committee and consultant team were in attendance. These actions included three SC exercises intended to (1) verify public involvement strategy; (2) verify study area limits and concerns; and (3) establish specific goals & objectives for the project. Important points of the meeting were as follows:

Introductions / Project Approach

Project Binders: The Consultant Team distributed Project Binders to each member of the Steering Committee. Each binder contains project contact information and hard-copy presentation materials for the SC members to keep as reference, with the intention that future updates / additions will be provided at each subsequent SC meeting.

Approach / Schedule: The Consultant Team gave an overview of the project approach, encompassing four overall tasks:

1. Steering Committee Meetings
2. Evaluation of Planning Documents
3. Implementation Plan
4. Public Outreach & Involvement

Evaluation of Planning Documents will provide the Consultant Team with knowledge of various area organizational plans and set study area parameters. Familiarity with these documents will assist the Consultant Team in implementing a final solution that aligns with existing plans. It was determined that the primary planning documents to be considered include:

- North East Area Comprehensive Plan of 2005
- Erie County Long Range Transportation Plan 2040
- Seaway Trail Plan of 2005
- Greenways Plan of 2010
- National Park Service Historic District Plans
- Mercyhurst North East Strategic Plan
- Erie County Comprehensive Plan of 2008
- North East Township and Borough School District Plans

Public Outreach & Involvement discussion was led by Shannon Debes. Public outreach will include six (6) Steering Committee meetings, four (4) Stakeholder Meetings with area businesses, and three (3) Public Meetings, as well as the utilization of physical and online media to publicize the project. Varying locations and times will be considered when scheduling meetings to accommodate the needs of attendees. Borough Manager Bob Brayman indicated that he is open to starting a new website for the project or modifying the existing borough website. Mr. Brayman deferred to the advice of the WR&A team to determine whether to utilize the existing tab on the borough website, or launch a new one. At this point, the borough is happy to use its own website for the project, as a tab labeled "North East PCTI" already exists. The discussion on project and meeting notification for the public expanded to discussion



of media outlets. Those that the steering committee felt would have the most impact at this stage of the project are listed below.

It was discussed by the Steering Committee that the project needs to be branded to encourage adoption of the project within the community. A revision of the project name "PCTI" to an easily-identifiable name was recommended.

SC Exercise #1 – Verify Public Involvement Strategy

The Consultant Team indicated that in addition to the Steering Committee, other advisory groups would participate in the project in various roles, including key stakeholders. Thus it was necessary to establish a strategy for public involvement moving forward, which included identifying the key stakeholders and potential venues for outreach.

Industrial/Business Leaders

- Welch's
- Ridg-U-Rak
- Better Baked Foods (Bob Miller)
- Robert's Trucking
- Bay Valley Food
- Electric Materials
- National Grape
- Farm Bureau
- Bike Shop (Dave Dennis)
- Developers (Dave Thornton)
- Wineries (Bob Mazza)

Community Groups

- North East Recreation Commission
- North East in Bloom
- North East Historical Society
- Lakeshore Railway Museum
- Welch's Museum (2012 opening)
- Arts Council
- Baker Creek Watershed
- Shade Tree Commission
- Church Groups

Education Centers

- Mercyhurst North East
- North East School District
- CMA Preschool
- Creekside Christian School
- First Presbyterian School
- St. Gregory's School

Fire and EMS

- North East Borough Police Dept
- Chief of Police (Chris Thompson)
- North East Twp through State Police
- Fire Chief (Dave Meehl)
- EMS through Fire Dept.

Potential venues for early public outreach:

- North East News-Journal
- Mercyhurst North East radio morning show (WYNE 1530 AM)
- 1 page newsletter to fit into water/sewer bills
- Links from the North East Chamber of Commerce and Township websites
- Chamber of Commerce newsletter
- Informational fliers in Chamber office, the McCord Memorial Library, coffee shops



SC Exercise #2 – Verify Study Area Limits

Study Area: A map of the proposed study area was displayed with a goal of setting boundaries large enough to fully understand the transportation system and to include key sites throughout the community. The proposed area encompassed the entire Borough of North East and North East Township.

Map Mark-Ups: A break-out session was conducted to allow SC members to mark up hard-copy maps and identify key community destinations or initial areas of concern. This feedback would help to validate the study area and prepare for SC Exercise #3.

The study area includes areas along SR 89, US 20, Route 5, downtown North East, and various recreational centers throughout the township including wineries, Freeport Beach, Gibson Park, Eaton Reservoir, Grahamville Reservoir, campsites, etc. The study area also encompasses industrial centers south of the borough, such as Welch's and Robert's Trucking.

(Note: the Consultant Team anticipates referencing this feedback to help guide future field-surveys and to prepare graphic map displays that could serve as idea "catalysts" if presented at future SC or Public Meetings.)



SC Exercise #3 – Establish Goals & Objectives

Sample goals & objectives from similar projects were presented to the SC. In addition, SC members voiced the following specific concerns and suggestions:

- **Need for multimodal linkages**
 - Connection of Borough to the Seaway Trail and tourism related traffic
 - Walking pathway from downtown to Cemetery Rd to connect to potential Arboretum
 - Multi-use path along Twenty Mile Creek
 - Connect new pathway between Lakeshore Railway Museum and Mercyhurst to Downtown
 - Bicycle path to Freeport Beach
 - For the bicycle path to Freeport Beach, many commented that SR 89 would not be conducive to bicycle traffic; however, Orchard Beach Road runs parallel to SR 89 and possibly has available ROW
 - Bicycle path along SR 5 – very scenic
- **Improve wayfinding signs for area assets**
 - Freeport Beach
 - Wineries
 - Marina
 - Hiking/Biking Trails, including Seaway Trail
- **Access Issues**
 - Multiple at-grade railroad crossings which by law cannot be crossed by school buses or EMS
 - SR 89 is the primary North-South route - heavy truck traffic during harvest season
 - Heaviest traffic period observed on Friday afternoon/evening
 - Traffic signals may need to be re-timed during festivals
 - In the southern portion of the borough, there is difficulty in accessing SR 89 from unsignalized minor approaches due to heavy trucks and lack of gaps in mainstream traffic
 - When I-90 closes, traffic detours onto SR 89 and US 20
- **Safety Concerns**
 - Speeding concerns along Lake and Pearl Streets near the Mercyhurst NE Campus and the medical plaza
 - Geometric issues at SR 89 at US 20 (Main and Lake Streets) – trucks make difficult maneuvers through the CBD so much that cement pillars currently protect buildings
 - Two high frequency/fatal crash areas were identified: SR 89 at SR 5, SR 89 at Sidehill Road
 - Curve on SR 89 near Robert's Trucking identified as potential dangerous curve
 - Sight distance issue at US 20 and Gay Road
- Improve ADA and bicycle accessibility and equipment at Freeport Beach
- Parking during festivals and events
- Parking options, including removal of outdated meters and pricing strategies
- Raised idea of potential Truck Route/detour from west to south to avoid the Central Business District
- Future land use potentially affected by flood zone designations

The various comments encompassed the need for an interconnected pedestrian and bicycle trail system between downtown North East and the area's assets. Many comments addressed heavy truck traffic patterns and the North-South access route, as well as identified geometric issues at intersections. Safety concerns were pointed out, including the high incidence of speeding on Lake and Pearl Streets, along with the frequency and severity of crashes on SR 89 at Route 5 and SR 89 at Sidehill Road.



A broad set of **goals and objectives** was discussed and approved by the Steering Committee, including:

- Improve linkages between neighborhoods and employment centers, and downtown
- Address key issues including wayfinding, safety, and access issues
- Identify strategies to revitalize downtown
- Evaluate multimodal traffic flows during events
- Develop a prioritized list of projects for implementation

The above is a memorandum of understanding between the parties regarding the topics discussed and the decisions reached. Any participants desiring to add to, or otherwise amend the minutes, are requested to put their comments in writing to the writer within seven (7) days; otherwise, the minutes will stand as written.