“Planning Toolkit” Update for Municipal Planners

From Executive Director Steve Deck, AICP

It’s been a very busy year at TCRPC as you’ll see in this issue of our newsletter, which focuses on recent accomplishments and ongoing activities. However, I wanted to take a little time to talk about an upcoming activity that I think will be of real interest, especially to municipal planners.

We’re optimistic that we may soon receive a grant from the PA Department of Community and Economic Development that would enable us to update our online “Planning Toolkit.” If you’re not familiar with the Toolkit, you can easily find it here or under the Regional section of our website. It has links to resources, research material and model ordinances on a range of topics, including building stock, cultural resources, infrastructure, land development, open spaces and transportation. We hope to update and significantly improve these resources, and make the “tools” much easier for municipalities and others to use.

To tailor the updated Toolkit to meet your planning needs, we’d like to have input from the municipalities in Dauphin and Perry counties to make sure we understand your challenges. With that in mind, we hope to obtain the DCED grant and send a survey in the coming weeks. (We plan to complete the effort even without the grant, although it’ll take more time.)

Meanwhile, if you have questions or comments, feel free to reach out to your Local Planning Assistance representative or email us at planning@tcrpc-pa.org.

Please Join Us for Our FREE 2020 Virtual Luncheon on Oct. 1!

TCRPC’s 2020 Annual Luncheon will be held Thursday, October 1 from 11:30 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. via Zoom.

Like everyone else this year, we’ve had to move a lot of our activities online thanks to COVID-19, so that’s what we’ve done with our postponed luncheon, which was originally set to take place back in May.

Our virtual luncheon, although shorter than our usual in-person event and requiring you to supply your own lunch (we hope that’s obvious), will be packed with plenty of timely and interesting presentations for everyone who tunes in, including updates from our own TCRPC staff, from some of our top sponsors, and a keynote from Danushka Nanayakkara-Skillington, Assistant Vice President for Forecasting and Analysis for the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB).

Danushka was to be the guest speaker at our in-person luncheon, and she’s graciously agreed to fulfill her role remotely. She’ll speak about housing across the country and at the local level, touching on the economy, the housing market, affordability and the NAHB forecast.

Contined next page ...
Virtual Luncheon Set for Oct. 1

*Continued from previous page ...*

She is a former senior economist for NAHB and was senior economic analyst for J.D. Power. She holds degrees in economics and business administration from Otterbein University and Johns Hopkins University.

CM credits pending for the presentation.

**FREE REGISTRATION INFO:**

Each virtual attendee must register — for free — using the link below so we can get an accurate count. Zoom will assign a unique link for each person and send you the necessary log-on information.

Sign up today by clicking here.

HATS RTP Implementation Grant Program Update

**By Andrew Bomberger, Regional Planner**

The first application round of the HATS Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Implementation Grant Program ended on July 31. In total, 17 applications were received from potential project sponsors across Cumberland, Dauphin and Perry counties. Applications are currently being reviewed, with funding anticipated to be awarded at the September 25 HATS Coordinating Committee meeting.

The program funds transportation planning studies and construction projects that meet RTP and TCRPC Regional Growth Management Plan goals while “providing for safer, more walkable, bikeable, and transit friendly transportation systems.”

For more information, click here.

TCRPC’s Operational Response to Coronavirus

**By Rishona Campbell, Administrative Assistant**

On March 16th, Governor Tom Wolf ordered non-essential business statewide to shutter. Here at TCRPC, we responded accordingly, but also had to keep in mind that we had to continue on with our regular process of reviewing and approving land-development and subdivision plans -- as well as participating in the advising and support services that we offer to many various entities.

Thankfully, our response to these unprecedented events was very efficient. All staff were provided with remote access to our internal network and remote access to email. A Zoom account was created so that we could host meetings virtually. We created a “contact-less” process of placing land development plans in a box in the lobby, with signage and directions posted both on-site and online to explain the new process. And while we did not have anyone on-site to answer phone calls, all voicemails were forwarded and answered promptly.

Beginning on June 22, after Dauphin County’s transition into green status, TCRPC’s staff came back on-site at 50% percent capacity, with half of the staff working remotely on rotating schedules. Management and administrative staff are on-site every day to answer phones, accept mail and deliveries, and sign land development plans.

Our office is now open. Access is limited by having the front door locked, with staff members letting people in as capacity allows. Proper social distancing protocols apply, appropriate face masks are required, and all visitors will have their temperature taken and have hand sanitizer provided. We also initiated a regular cleaning and sanitizing schedule for the office.

The pandemic has presented many challenges to our day-to-day lives, but here at TCRPC we stay committed to keeping our previous level of service, professionalism and safety. We are very proud of how our staff has gone above and beyond to adjust so quickly.

If you have any questions about current operations and processes, feel free to reach out to us at 717-234-2639 or planning@tcrpc-pa.org.
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Stormwater Program Update

By Jerry Duke, Dauphin County Planning Coordinator

TCRPC staff continue to work on a study to analyze stormwater issues in Dauphin County.

In cooperation with the Dauphin County Conservation District, TCRPC has engaged the services of HRG, Inc. to complete an analysis with the goal of seeking cost-effective, short- and long-term stormwater solutions for local municipalities. The intent is to achieve cost savings through the sharing of services and/or functions while also improving overall water quality.

HRG’s study, to be completed this summer, will outline a strategy to address these issues, including the costs and benefits of a regional approach.

Once completed, a draft of the study will be available for review by municipalities, the Dauphin County Planning Commission and the county commissioners. A series of outreach meetings with the municipalities will be conducted to discuss the results, procedures for formal documents, and creation of a regional stormwater program.

I-81 Improvement Strategy Taking Shape

TCRPC continues to work with key transportation planning partners in the region on a no-borders evaluation of 100 miles of Interstate 81 in South Central PA to identify the highway’s safety, congestion, condition and access needs, as well as those of the connecting roads and infrastructure it affects.

The goal is to create a strategy to address these needs according to specific focus areas based on feedback from local stakeholders and the public. As you can imagine, the improvements needed on I-81 -- from the Maryland state line all the way through to Lebanon County -- are complex and vary greatly by location. The strategy we develop will serve as a playbook for setting priorities and funding future projects as the necessary resources become available through the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and through regional long-range transportation plans.

Since December 2019, motorists and key stakeholders have weighed in on the various needs and concerns along the corridor, with safety and congestion topping the list of priorities. (See the “Major Issues Identified by County” chart below.) You can learn more about what we’ve heard from respondents on our website at i81southcentralpa.com. The feedback we receive, along with detailed traffic data, local development trends and asset management data, will be used to identify focus areas for future projects, all of which will be available for public review and comment as we move forward.

Updates will be provided at the region’s upcoming Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) meetings and through a VIRTUAL Open House Public Meeting coming this fall, so be sure to sign up for the mailing list today and stay

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**MAJOR ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY COUNTY**

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**New TIP Adopted, RTP Update Underway**

*By Lauren Weaver, Planner*

On June 26th, the Harrisburg Area Transportation Study approved the 2021-2024 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which comprises the federal- and state-funded transportation projects planned for Cumberland, Dauphin and Perry counties for the next four years.

The update includes 41 bridge projects, 21 roadway projects, three bicycle/pedestrian projects, and one intermodal project, as well as funding for public transportation and interstate projects. In total, more than $800 million in projects are programmed.

More information on the HATS 2021-2024 TIP, including project listings, air quality conformity analysis and environmental justice core elements analysis, is available here.

HATS staff is currently in the process of updating the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), which is anticipated to be released in 2021. This update will include, among other things, the most recent safety data and trends, an expanded Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Backbone, and a revised RTP Project Pipeline.

The RTP Project Pipeline is a document that lists all of the areas of transportation need submitted to TCRPC to be considered for the TIP. These submissions are given a high/medium/low priority ranking based on an objective analysis of needs identified throughout the RTP. These priority rankings are then used TIP development/project selection.

During this update, TCRPC staff will review the submitted needs and reach out to municipalities to determine if their information is up-to-date or if other needs are to be added. The goal of the process is to improve communications between municipalities and HATS as well as to re-evaluate outdated items in the pipeline.

For any questions about this process, please email Lauren Weaver.
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Zoning Update Coming to GIS Resources Application

By Alexa Korber, Planner

TCRPC’s online GIS Resources application is in the process of being updated to show zoning on a municipal level. Currently, the application shows generalized zoning across Dauphin and Perry counties. After the update, users will be able to zoom to the municipal level and see a more accurate depiction of zoning districts.

The update is being completed by TCRPC’s summer interns, Mack Breech and Ben Warner. The data will be available on the online application later in the summer.

Please note that the update is meant to create a more accurate visual representation of Dauphin and Perry counties and is NOT meant to serve as the final word on zoning. The official documentation and responsibility of interpretation of zoning lies with the individual municipality.

The application can be viewed here.
TCRPC’s long-running Lunch & Learn program is part of our effort to implement the 2040 Regional Growth Management Plan.

These FREE webinars covering land use topics presented by Penn State Extension run from noon to 1:15 p.m. in our second floor conference room at 112 Market St. in downtown Harrisburg. They offer Certification Maintenance credits, providing a convenient way for you to stay current with your continuing education requirements.

COMING UP:

- **Wed., Aug. 19:** The Future of Zoning: The View from the COVID-19 Lens
- **Wed., Sept. 16:** Farmers Markets Before, During & Post-COVID-19
- **Wed., Oct. 21:** What to Look for in a Planning Commission/Zoning Hearing Board Member
- **Wed., Nov. 18:** Changing Consumer Food Sourcing in the COVID-19 Pandemic

**NOTE:** Due to social distancing guidelines, attendance is limited. Masks must be worn in our office and other health guidelines must be followed. Please visit our Education & Training page to register.
“Picture Perry”: Perry County’s Next Comprehensive Plan

By Jason Finnerty, Perry County Planning Coordinator

Picture Perry: Can you see it?

The vision is a decade-reach, yet preparations are already underway. The simply succinct title is an alluring effort to ramp up participation, which has been traditionally hard to come by.

Thus far the buy-in from partnering groups has been tremendous, with many wanting to review and offer suggested questions to benefit their own causes between strategic planning pursuits.

All projects need a foundation to adequately support what ends up being assembled. The Picture Perry planning documents will be a three-part compendium consisting of Part A - Basic Studies, Part B - Our Plan, and Part C - Our Action.

Part A will capture essential background information about the county to use in conjunction with Parts B and C. This data also satisfies PA Municipalities Planning Code requirements and provides analysis to support the plan’s goals and strategies.

So far this year, six draft surveys have been assembled to follow an initial quality of life survey. The quality of life survey will serve the primary entry survey from which individuals will then be able to access each of the other surveys and complete any that pique their interest or coincide with their expertise.

The other surveys will cover the following categories: community facilities, economic, energy systems, historic and cultural resources, housing, land use, natural resources and recreation, and transportation.

In the last month, input on the draft surveys has been sought from our planning partners. An in-house discussion will look to coordinate this effort with needs for the regional, transportation and Dauphin County planning programs.

You can look for these surveys to appear on the Perry County Planning Commission’s webpage sometime this fall.

Perry County Planning Commission Vacancy

By Jason Finnerty, Perry County Planning Coordinator

The Perry County Planning Commission (PCPC) again finds itself searching for a member to fill a vacancy.

PCPC member Zach Huss announced in July that he would step down from the commission due to career pursuits outside the county. This has opened a seat that the county has had difficulty filling in the past.

The remainder of the volunteer position’s four-year term would continue through December 31, 2021. Ideally the potential candidate would be from the western end of the county.

Anyone interested in filling the vacated spot is asked to email your resume to the PCPC office at pcpc@perryco.org.
Have you tried TCRPC’s geographic information system (GIS) website?

CLICK HERE:

GIS Resources
Please scroll through the application to view the user guide.

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TCRPC Summer 2020 Newsletter
Say Hello to Our Summer Interns

Ben Warner, top, and Edward “Mack” Breech, bottom, are our summer interns for 2020. Their work has been invaluable, even under the challenging conditions presented by the coronavirus.

We’ve kept them busy with traffic counts in Dauphin and Perry counties, as pictured below, as well as with updating the geographic information systems data on our online environmental resources application, assisting with affordable housing data and much more.

A York resident, Ben is majoring in GeoEnvironmental studies and planning to get a GIS certificate from Shippensburg University.

From Mechanicsburg, Mack is pursuing a Bachelor of Science degree in Urban and Environmental Planning with a minor in Geographic Information Systems from West Chester University.

Census Effort Continues in County

TCRPC continues to lead the effort of the Dauphin County Complete Count Committee, which was tasked with promoting the 2020 Census, particularly in neighborhoods that have underreported their populations in the past.

As of this newsletter, many of those areas are now reporting better-than-before numbers, which bodes well for Dauphin County having a more accurate count in 2020. This means the possibility of more federal dollars for housing, school lunches, roadways and other support in the future.

Part of the effort has included advertising in local publications and on the web, electronic signs in grocery stores and restaurants (see photo above), plus a “Census Week of Action” with a heavy social media presence encouraging folks who haven’t yet participated to visit 2020census.gov and do their part. Funding for the advertising was made possible through a $15,000 grant from the PA Department of Community and Economic Development.

The Complete Count Committee, which includes over 60 local leaders in business, non-profits, education, government and more, will continue working together to promote the Census until the national effort has ended.
Did you know you can view past meetings of the Harrisburg Area Transportation Study’s Coordinating Committee on the HATS YouTube Channel? 

Click here to watch!

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TCRPC Summer 2020 Newsletter
REQUEST A PLANNING CONSISTENCY LETTER

Many grant/funding programs require applicants to submit a letter from their local, county or regional planning agency to confirm that a project is consistent with local plans.

Click here to request a planning consistency letter, or call the TCRPC office at 717-234-2639 for more information.

You may also email us at planning@tcrpc-pa.org.

PUBLIC INFORMATION & PARTICIPATION

The results of the 2020 Census help to determine federal funding for hospitals, fire departments, school lunches and other critical programs and services right here in our community.

It’s not too late!

Go to 2020census.gov today and do your part #BeCounted!

www.tcrpc-pa.org

The preparation and distribution of the TCRPC Newsletter is financed in part by grants from the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, and Dauphin and Perry counties.