

## **Planning and Stakeholder Relations Committee**

### **Minutes**

**February 17, 2022**

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 am in Port Authority's Neal H. Holmes Board Room at 345 Sixth Avenue, Fifth Floor, Pittsburgh, with the following in attendance:

#### **Via WebEx Board Committee Members**

John Tague, Jr., Chairman  
Jessica Walls-Lavelle  
Ann Ogoreuc  
Stephanie Turman

#### **Board Members and Solicitor**

Gerald Delon  
Jeffrey Letwin  
Representative Lori Mizgorski  
Michelle Zmijanac

### **Opening Remarks**

Mr. Tague, Committee Chair, opened the meeting and welcomed those in attendance.

### **Approval of Minutes from the February 17, 2022, Planning and Stakeholder Relations Committee Meeting**

Mr. Tague, Jr. Committee members if there were any corrections to the minutes. There were none and members approved the minutes.

### **South Hills Junction Conceptual Plan Presentation (Moira Egler)**

Ms. Egler provided an overview of the South Hills Junction Station Area Plan, which wrapped up in February. The project timeline began in 2011 when the City of Pittsburgh conducted a study of the area. This explored a transit revitalization investment district or TRID would centered around South Hills Junction. This would have created a special taxing district to fund transportation improvements in and around the junction. At the time, it was found the TRID was not feasible, the study did spark the imagination of the community and showed what might be possible on the site. Our own study was influenced by some of the ideas in SMARTRID.

Fast forward to 2016, our Port Authority developed TOD guidelines which basically represents the beginning of our TOC, Transit Oriented Communities Program. Our own planning process started back in May 2021, when we held the first public meeting. The first meeting in May 2021, focused on existing conditions and hearing thoughts from the community on what they would like to see on-site.

At meeting 2, two the community was presented with two different scenarios for the site, and we asked the public to provide feedback on both of those scenarios.

At the last round of meetings, we were able to hold an in-person pop up event, at the Warrington Reck Center and at the station itself. Both events turned out to be very successful at getting community feedback.

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The final meeting in November was virtual. We presented the final scenario for the site to the community.

All of these meetings were virtual except for the pop-up, and we use Social Pinpoint, an online engagement website to solicit feedback and provide project information. We got lots of helpful comments this way as it gave people another remote option to engage with us during the Pandemic. We have a link to our project website, which is still active and hold all of the project documents.

During the meeting a slide was shown for the South Hills Junction Station Area Conceptual Master Plan Improving all six access points into the station including:

- Rebuilding the steps at Parr and Jasper Streets
- An accessible walking trail from Albert Street in Mt. Washington
- Realign intersection at Haberman and Warrington Avenues which will enhance pedestrians' safety and make this a more obvious and welcoming entrance to the station.
- Street scape improvements along Warrington Avenue including wider sidewalks and street trees.
- Improve pedestrian crosswalks including a rebuilt ADA ramp with an accessible sidewalk.
- The most exciting element to us and to the community is a new pedestrian bridge that will span from the top of the junction and will connect to the top of Lelia Street steps that are on the Mt. Washington side to Warrington Avenue on the Beltzhoover side.
- A new control tower and elevator that will allow travel from the pedestrian bridge into the station area.
- Rebuilt and resigned station that combines bus and rail on one platform.

Another slide shows the Station Area Master Plan which includes:

- Combined Bus and Rail at one station
- Third reversible center lane – that would allow vehicles to bypass others if there should be a break down or any other emergency.
- New seating, new screens with lighting and other amenities
- A canopy that will expand over the entire platform
- New design will allow for off board payment for all modes at South Hills Junction Bus and Rail. This would be a new thing for Port Authority of Allegheny County.

We also looked at opportunities for TOD on-site, we looked at three locations, first was Parcel A which was on the current site of the salt shed; Parcel B which is called the rail tie storage area, where we store old rail ties. Parcel C is what we call the M-loop or employee parking and a bus turn-a-around.

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#### Cost Estimate:

- Range between \$53-\$69 million – this is the cost just for construction, does not include account for inflation or soft costs such as site prep for TOD or relocation for our facilities. We could phase the project in such a way to help reduce upfront costs while keeping development opportunities intact

#### Implement Strategy:

- Short Term: (0-2 years) – Facilities Master Plan, this is a priority which was called out in our long-range Plan NEXTransit, this would help determine where facilities, Identify Funding Sources for both design and construction; Develop PAAC equitable TOD policy
- Mid Term: (2-5 years) – Station Architectural Design; Pursue Construction Funding; RFP Process with a developer
- Long Term: (5-8 years) – Formalize joint development partnership; Station and access to station & TOD construction process.
- All documents associated with this final plan can be found both on our project website as well as Port Authority of Allegheny County website, [www.Port Authority.org/South Hills junction](http://www.PortAuthority.org/SouthHillsjunction).

### **Summary of Public Input for Service Change Comment Period/Public Hearing (David Huffaker)**

Mr. Huffaker presented a summary of the public process for the November 2020 Pandemic-related major service changes.

The board authorized a public outreach process and public comment period beginning on December 01, 2021, to February 01, 2022.

We held a public information session to give people the chance to learn more about what this hearing was about and how to provide public comments.

The formal public hearing was held on January 27, 2022. At that hearing we had six public comments and a range of concerns and questions. Of course, everyone would like to see service restored back to normal levels as quickly as possible. As we talked about the process for restoring service there were desires to see transparencies of our process and understanding of what that decision process will look like. They would like to have some public input of the services restored.

Out of the 15 routes that were had major service reduction, there were specific concerns about three specific routes that the public felt should receive consideration if we do restore that service.

We certainly will be taking that input to our thought processes to work on future service changes and try to get back to normal. We certainly would like to provide those

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connections particularly for essential workers and ensure that they are not left out of other changes. There were comments and concerns making sure that we give top priority to people who are reliant on transit which is certainly something that fits within our protocols as well.

We are encouraged by the amount of participation that took place during this hearing and public comment process. We will have a book of all of the written comments that is currently being prepared and will be shared with the board. All board members will have a chance to review all of the commentary both written and oral. We have hearing notes that will be transcribed and put down on paper for the board. That report will also be made available for the public through our website. T

There were no resolutions, or any board action required from this process. We did think it was a great opportunity to connect with our customers and our stakeholders. This allowed us to look at specific considerations think as we attempt to restore service back to pre-pandemic levels.

**Bridge Program Overview and Recent Service – Related Changes (David Huffaker)**

Mr. Huffaker explained that there is a lot of recent attention placed on our bridges, due to the Fern Hollow Bridge collapse. He provided a brief overview of our Bridge Program. He also provided an update on the Sawmill Run Boulevard bridge and the related service changes.

**Port Authority Bridges:**

- Maintains 79 bridges
- 30 bridges serve our light rail system
- 34 of our bridges are along our busways, East, South and West,
- 3 bridges are related to our inclines, Monongahela, or Duquesne
- 11 are considered local bridges.

Bridges that were consolidated into Port Authority when it was formed with the private railways and various systems that fed the infrastructures to Port Authority. In some cases, we operate service on some of those local bridges and some bridges operate for vehicle traffic. We do have a number of bridges that are actually 100 years old, so this requires a significant amount spending and care and feeding if you will. So, on average over the past few years, we spend about \$7million dollars, inspecting, repairing, and rehabilitating, and in some cases we actually replaced bridges in our system.

I feel strongly that we are in a good position with our bridge program and hope you will feel that after we are done here. We learned a lot of about condition scores in the bridge inventory over the past month or so.

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Again, out of our 79 bridges our average condition score is 6.1 which would be in the satisfactory classification. We have a number of bridges that are actually in poor condition, that would be a rating of 4. We have nine of those bridges (in poor condition), interestingly five of those are some of the local bridges. In those cases, we are often coordinating with other jurisdictions, some of those local bridges have complicated ownership and responsibilities shared with cities or bureaus, as well as railways. So, we coordinate with all parties on keeping those bridges in state of good repair. All bridges with a score of 4, are either already programmed in our capital program and we will talk about the contracting approach here in just a minute. Or these will be programmed in our FY2023 capital program and most of that work had been done prior to the failures we scene. But of course, there is an emphasis on keeping those bridges in a state of good repair.

A lot of discussions about inspections and most bridges are inspected on a two-year cycle by any old inspection process. If a bridge reaches a point of deterioration that it needs to be looked at more frequently, it could be annually, or quarterly and/or more frequent than that. We do not have any bridges that need to be inspected more than bi-annually. When we do an inspection it is coordinated with external consultants trained and certified by PennDOT; they do an independent review; they follow a strict checklist follow and there are generally accepted inspection principles. Also, there are contracts in place for those inspections and are at procurement for the next round of that process. In those cases, we have multiple contractors on the package, so there would be a primary inspector and a secondary inspector. When we get an inspection report those are reviewed both by in-house bridge team and a structures team, and they also work with our consultant team to identify if there are any maintenance requirements or capital programming that needs put in place. We also take our result and immediately put that in and actually done by the external consultants, will put that information in PennDOT management system that tracks all bridges throughout the state.

We work directly with PennDOT district 11 who then coordinates with the bridge program at Harrisburg and so that group will stay on top of the inspection cycles and will provide an additional maintenance check for us to make sure that the inspections are happening on-time. If this would not happen on-time we would get a notice of that, so we stay ahead of that cycle making sure we are doing our inspections as required by the schedule.

Port Authority has a see something says something program, and if anyone at Port Authority of Allegheny County or the public identifies an issue with a bridge they can notify us or let the staff know that they see something that looks out of place.

That is exactly how the Saw Mill Run Blvd Bridge anomaly was noted. There was a maintenance crew out in the busway. They noted that there was larger than expected gap in the expansion joint for the Saw Mill Run Bridge. Thanks to their keen eyes and training to be looking out for anomalies to identify this quickly before anything serious would have happened.

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We also do check contract for rehabilitation work again as I described, when we get an inspection report we will compare those results to previous inspection reports, identify if there are any anomalies. We will take a look at where the particular bridge falls within our 12-year capital program and identify if we need to change the timing of that or perhaps the bridge is in good shape, we can defer some of that work. Take a look at particular scope that is required to maintain a good repair for that bridge. We have ability to decide if we do a full replacement of a bridge, like the North Braddock bridge, that was replaced back in FY2019. We can also do repairs or regular maintenance, to keep the bridge in a state of good repair.

The Port Authority board approved a bridge restoration group project in January 2022, which is one of our packages we have on hand so we can continue to advance our capital program. We also would look at doing a specific request for proposals if there was a relatively large scope of work. So, a bridge such as the Pan Handle Bridge, which is a very large project is something that in the future, we would be taking out a separate contracted project. I will also note that an event like we saw with Saw Mill Run, we use our ancillary contracts that also have been recently approved by the board. Ancillary contractors have both bridge expertise and emergency capabilities to respond to events in the field. We are well positioned contractually to address the bridge program.

On February 3, 2022, there was an anomaly noted with the Saw Mill Run bridge. That bridge is just over 1,000 foot long and a series of spans, but it is considered one bridge running over Route 51. It was built in 1977 and it actually replaced a previous structure. As I described, the anomaly was discovered by our maintenance staff, as they were reviewing the busway. They immediately called our Engineering team; who was on-site within the hour; they brought in our bridge inspectors' team as well as our construction support to review the status of the bridge. It was determined that to be proactive in the state of outmost caution, to close the bridge and do some engineering to determine what caused this gap.

If you recall that day, kind of unusual weather all day and overnight, there was rain and freezing rain and then it almost immediately turned to much colder conditions. So, some water infiltrated into the support structure then it essentially flash froze, so when things freeze they expand.

Typically, when they expand there looking for places to expand to, it can't go up because there is a rail on top of the bridge, that keeps a cap on it. What we discovered was there was actually an old abonnement behind the bridge that was affixed to the hillside and that was also removable, so the only place for expansion to happen was to push on the support structure of the bridge. The orange steel support structure was pushed slightly, a matter of inches, pushed into the rest of the span and so that caused the further expansion of the joint. We have taken the past two weeks to do extensive forensic engineering, we cleared out some of the debris, we were able to jack up the bridge slightly, this is again a matter of fraction of inches. We do believe we identified the general repairs that need to be done. We just made an announcement that they bridge is

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expected to be out of service for 10 to 12 weeks, so just under three months, we hope from this point. That is somewhat dependent on making sure that we don't have any supply chain issues. We feel confident that we can execute the repairs in a relatively expeditious process but certainly any disruption, this is a key connection point for our bus and LRV service into downtown, certainly is something that we are trying to minimize. We will hopefully make progress there and will certainly keep the public informed as things are advancing.

The Saw Mill Run Bridge is our key connection point for the red line as well as the South Busway into downtown. We had to push all of our customers onto the Blue Line and the Silver Line for Overbrook and that has required us to put a bus shuttle into the Beechview neighborhood connecting Fallowfield to Potomac. Customers are able to access the Blue Line and the Silver Line through Willow through our Castle Shannon Junction.

The Fern Hollow Bridge which is not one of our bridges as you all know that is under MTSB investigations, so, there is really not much for us to say. But I did want to address the service implications for Fern Hollow, we have two major bus routes 61A and 61B that use the Fern Hollow Bridge. Those routes are coming from the east, and we do expect this to be very long- detour, perhaps years certainly not months.

Those routes are detouring onto Penn Avenue and then they turn onto Dallas off of Forbes Avenue and then turn on their normal path into downtown. We are also going to be looking at other options beefing up some of the service from the east busway to alleviate some of the pressure on the Forbes Avenue Service. We will continue to study that and unfortunately this interruption came just as we had finalized the most recent service change so were looking at maybe supplements to the detours and or future changes that we will be making to the system.

We have also been looking at the entire rest of our service and determining if there are any other service issues related to bridges throughout our system. Happily, we have not identified anything that was not already known. There are a couple of bridges that have weight restrictions, but those have been identified and we operate accordingly and are in coordination with PennDOT..

We also, reviewed all of our service to identify if there might be any issues routing two and from garages and we have not identified any other place were there might be concerns.

We are updating instructions for each of the garages, so operators have the proper information about where they can't go as far as bridges go. We have been coordinating with Operations training staff to make sure that they have the information they need.

**Questions from Board Members and Others**

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1. Ms. Zmijanac asked Mr. Huffaker how is it going through the neighborhood that you are running shuttles through? With the tight curves and tight turns for the buses with snow and cars on the road.
  - a. Mr. Huffaker replied it was a rocky first couple of days as we were reintegrating our bus service. It has been quite some time since there was bus service on Broadway Avenue and so we identified a couple pinch points and some potential parking issues. We are working with our operators on how best to navigate through that neighborhood. I have not scene a large number of complaints since those first couple of days, but we will continue to monitor that and work with our operations team to ensure we are good neighbors and hopefully we have a short detour.
  
2. Ms. Turman asked Mr. Huffaker as it relates to some community engagement and keeping the community a breast of what is going on around them are we planning any strategy to reach out via survey or pop-up or any hands on.
  - a. Mr. Huffaker answered that is a good question, I would say we don't have any plans to do a survey in the neighborhood but that is something we can consider.