

MPMS 98869 West Newton Bridge Project
SR 0136, Section C10 over Youghiogheny River
West Newton Borough, Westmoreland County
PennDOT Engineering District 12-0

DRAFT CONSULTING PARTY MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, April 1, 2021 held via Microsoft Teams from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m.

1. Welcome and Teams Meeting Logistics (Keith Heinrich/PennDOT)
The meeting is recorded and by attending, the consulting parties consent to that recording.
2. Overview of meeting agenda (Keith Heinrich/PennDOT)
3. Introductions (Keith Heinrich/PennDOT)
 - Keith Heinrich, Aboveground Cultural Resources Professional (CRP) -- Districts 9 and 12 / PennDOT Bureau of Project Delivery (BOPD)
 - Kristin Scarr, Archaeology CRP – Districts 9 and 12 / PennDOT Bureau of Project Delivery (BOPD)
 - Barbara Shaffer, Environmental Specialist / Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
 - William Kovach, District Executive / PennDOT District 12-0
 - Rachel Duda, Assistant District Executive – Design / PennDOT District 12-0
 - Barry Lyons, Project Manager / PennDOT District 12-0
 - Joyce Susa, Cristin Covert, Liberty Hill, Jeremy Hughes, Gary Barber, Mary Egros -- Project Team / PennDOT District 12-0
 - Keith Saloum / PennDOT Central Office
 - Mike Cuddy, Robert Pitassi -- consultant support / TranSystems
 - Patricia Slovinac -- consultant support (cultural resources) / A.D. Marble

Consulting Parties

- Mary Popovich, Mayor – West Newton Borough
 - Daniel Carpenter – Westmoreland County Planning
 - Nathan Holth – Historic Bridge Foundation
 - Cheryl Nagle – PA SHPO
 - [Additional Consulting Parties were invited and offered the opportunity to participate virtually via review/response to the meeting minutes and/or recording to be posted on You Tube. Any additional comments will be incorporated into a final version of the meeting minutes].
4. Overview of the Section 106 Process (Keith Heinrich/PennDOT)
Brief summary of the Section 106 process and where this project is in the process.

MPMS 98869 West Newton Bridge Project
SR 0136, Section C10 over Youghiogheny River
West Newton Borough, Westmoreland County
PennDOT Engineering District 12-0

5. Project Updates and Timeline (Keith Heinrich/PennDOT)

Brief summary of the Section 106 milestones and timelines for this project.

6. Aboveground Area of Potential Effects (APE) and historic properties (Keith Heinrich/PennDOT)

There are five National Register eligible or listed historic properties in the APE: the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie Railroad (currently used as the Great Allegheny Passage, or (GAP) Trail), the West Newton Downtown Historic District, the West Newton Bridge, the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, and the Dick Building.

7. Project Effects to Historic Properties (Keith Heinrich/PennDOT)

Summary of anticipated permanent and temporary impacts of the project.

There will be no effect to the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie Railroad, the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, or the Dick Building.

The West Newton Bridge will be affected, but the effect will not be adverse because the rehabilitation is following the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

There will be an effect to the West Newton Downtown Historic District because a temporary bridge may result in the demolition of a building within the district. Because the building does not contribute to the district, its demolition would be an effect, but not an adverse effect.

8. Rehabilitation of the West Newton Bridge (Keith Heinrich/PennDOT)

Brief summary of the work planned for the rehabilitation of the West Newton Bridge.

9. Effect to the West Newton Downtown Historic District (Keith Heinrich/PennDOT)

Brief summary of the project effects to the West Newton Downtown Historic District with photographs of the building that may be demolished.

10. Overall Project Effects (Keith Heinrich/PennDOT)

A table was presented showing the effects of the project to all historic properties.

11. Open Discussion (Keith Heinrich, Robert Pitassi, Mary Popovich, Barry Lyons, Barb Shaffer, Liberty Hill, Rachel Duda)

Keith Heinrich mentioned that there was one preliminary comment on the draft Determination of Effects report that was posted to PATH. SHPO commented that they would like the report to explain what option Alternative A referenced because there were four alternatives and, within those alternatives, there were a couple of additional options. Just a sentence or paragraph in the report addressing that comment should be sufficient. Rob Pitassi noted that TranSystems was not sure if the building along Water Street would need to be demolished because they are still evaluating their options.

MPMS 98869 West Newton Bridge Project
SR 0136, Section C10 over Youghiogheny River
West Newton Borough, Westmoreland County
PennDOT Engineering District 12-0

Mary Popovich asked whether borough officials could tell their constituents that there would be a temporary bridge since rumors about the project had already begun circulating in the borough. Barry Lyons responded that that should be fine. PennDOT staff had already had a conference call with borough officials about the project. Mary Popovich noted that borough council had been informed, but some of the townspeople could still be unaware of the plans for the project.

Barb Shaffer noted that the consulting party meeting was a public meeting, so it was OK to let people know about what was discussed. She cautioned, however, that, since the project was still in the development stage and had not completed the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review, the project plans could still change. She added that part of the reason for public meetings is that comments from the public may impact the design of the project.

Barry Lyons gave an overview of the decision-making process regarding the temporary bridge and some of the traffic flow issues that may come with a temporary bridge.

Liberty Hill added that there was a good deal of input from the community about ways to maintain access to the borough while the project was ongoing and that PennDOT wanted to make sure that when the project was completed, the repaired West Newton Bridge would last as long as possible before needing additional repairs.

Rachel Duda explained that any discussion of the project plans should be clearly noted as preliminary or draft or tentative.

Barry Lyons asked Mary Popovich to explain some of the aspects of the bridge that are important to her and she noted that the star was important to the community and has been on the bridge for many years.

Mary Popovich added that a previous closure for emergency repairs really harmed the business district and she was glad that those concerns, along with concerns about emergency services and flooding, were considered by PennDOT.

She also noted that the West Newton Bridge could be an attraction for the many users of the GAP Trail and wondered if there were any enhancements the council could undertake to the bridge such as lighting. She asked for some clarification of what would be included with the project. She also asked if the new bridge would accommodate the bicycle traffic related to the trail.

Barry Lyons responded that PennDOT had examined whether the sidewalk could be widened but it was not physically possible to do so.

MPMS 98869 West Newton Bridge Project
SR 0136, Section C10 over Youghiogheny River
West Newton Borough, Westmoreland County
PennDOT Engineering District 12-0

Barry Lyons noted that the design team is looking for ways to reduce the weight of the bridge and is looking at things like the deck and sidewalk. The bikes will probably need to share the road with the motor vehicles, like they do now.

Mary Popovich asked if a gateway or interpretive panels could be added to the railing on the sidewalk and Barry Lyons responded that he wasn't sure if the weight would be an issue in terms of the engineering but noted that PennDOT could not pay for a gateway or interpretive signage as part of the project. The borough would need to pay for any signage and installation.

Liberty Hill noted that there had been suggestions of placing features, such as an archway, on the bridge, but that raised issues with attaching new elements to the bridge and adding more weight. There was some suggestion of placing signage or other elements along the GAP Trail near, but not on, the bridge.

Mary Popovich noted that perhaps a local entity would fund some sort of signage or gateway.

Liberty Hill stated that PennDOT was excited about being able to rehabilitate a bridge and that it would be a positive project. Barb Shaffer agreed.

Barry Lyons discussed the lighting and noted that there are currently three cobra lights in the center of the bridge. He stated that they would most likely be replaced in kind, but if the borough wanted to pay for a different type of replacement, that would likely be doable. It is unclear if changing the lights or the bridge's paint color could be considered an effect.

Keith Heinrich responded that, as the project moves on, there would be continued consultation to make sure any changes like that are sensitive to the historic significance and integrity of the bridge.

12. Next Steps (Keith Heinrich/PennDOT)

The next steps in the process were summarized, including posting the meeting recording on PATH. The recording will be sent out to all participants and will be shared with other consulting parties.

[The recording of the meeting is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h2IXg50q1cY>].

13. Additional Questions (Keith Heinrich/PennDOT)

Keith Heinrich stated that attendees could feel free to reach out to anyone on the project team and that, for project-specific questions, they should contact Barry Lyons. He asked

MPMS 98869 West Newton Bridge Project
SR 0136, Section C10 over Youghiogheny River
West Newton Borough, Westmoreland County
PennDOT Engineering District 12-0

that any written comments on the project effects be submitted to the CRPs by April 16, 2021.

14. Thank you (Keith Heinrich/PennDOT)

Keith Heinrich thanked everyone for attending.