

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS
RELATED TO DVRPC BOARD ACTION ITEMS

July 28, 2016

2b. DVRPC Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Actions

**PA15-93: Repurposing of Unobligated Earmark Balances, (Various MPMS #s),
Various Counties in Pennsylvania**

From: Charles Krueger

County: Philadelphia

Zip Code: 19107

Date Received: 7/18/2016

Comment/Question: No earmarks for bikes and pedestrians is unacceptable.

Response: Below is DVRPC's response to your comment on Board action item 2b:

Thank you for your comment and consideration for pedestrians and bicyclists.

This action does not add any type of project to the TIP in the DVRPC PA region. The earmarks simply replace an existing funding source. All bike/pedestrian and roadway projects on the TIP will advance as scheduled. Any additional funds made available to the region will be placed in a reserve line item.

Earmark funds that would be repurposed to five significant "roadway" projects in our region will ensure that our region does not lose the funds provided by the earmarks because these projects are ready to obligate the money by Federal deadline, and the region has only one chance to decide where the funds would be repurposed. If the region decides to repurpose earmark funds to a project, and that project's schedule gets delayed beyond the Federal deadline, the region will lose those earmark funds. That is why we should repurpose earmark funds to a project that will surely meet the Federal deadline for obligation.

Earmarks are established by Federal legislation, which allocates a specific amount of money for a specific project, program, or organization outside the formula-driven or competitive award process. Due to Section 125 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2016, the ability to repurpose old, unspent balances of Federal earmarks on projects that may or may not include pedestrian/bicycle improvements allows our region to make funding available for current TIP projects that are advancing. Until now, State DOTs could not reallocate leftover earmark money on projects that were (1) completed at a lower cost than what Congress provided; (2) completed or are advancing with other

funding mechanisms; or (3) incomplete because of inadequate funds to move the project forward in the project delivery pipeline.

Note that many TIP projects which may appear to be “roadway only” projects incorporate pedestrian and bicycle improvements, where appropriate. For example, the County Line Road Widening project (MPMS #64779) that would receive repurposed earmark funds will include new sidewalks, and there are countless projects in the program that have bike and/or pedestrian improvements as components of larger capital investments.

Finally, please note that pedestrian and bicycle safety is one of PennDOT’s priorities. PennDOT has a State Strategic Highway Safety Plan that is driven by crash data and outlines safety priorities and strategies for where spending should be made in order to save lives. Improving pedestrian and bicycle safety is one of the main safety focus areas, and there are various safety strategies noted in this Plan. PennDOT also provides funding to pedestrian and bicycle improvements, such as the Pedestrian Safety Program, Safe Routes to School, Transportation Alternatives Program, and the Multimodal Transportation Fund. For further information, please visit www.penndot.gov/Pages/default.aspx.

Below is PennDOT's response to your comment on Board action item 2b:

The Department works with our planning partners across the Commonwealth to prioritize available transportation funding relative to need in each of our planning regions in Pennsylvania. The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2016 provided the opportunity for states to repurpose federal earmarks within certain guidelines authorized before September 30, 2005 that have less than ten percent of funding obligated. This approach helps to ensure that the federal earmark funds made available to specific projects that are not moving forward can be utilized on projects in the region that are ready to go – this is necessary to avoid any possibility of the federal funds lapsing due to a deadline as proscribed by the U.S. Department of Transportation. The earmark repurposing for the Delaware Valley Region reflects the coordinated effort to ensure that the federal funds available to the region do not lapse. It is important to note that the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission’s (DVRPC) transportation programs include many opportunities to fund bicycle, pedestrian, and trail projects which support a vibrant network of non-motorized opportunities to travel in the region.

2c. DVRPC Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Actions

NJ16-043: Repurposing of Unobligated Earmark Balances, (Various DB #s), Various Counties in New Jersey

From: Joseph Russell
County: Collingswood
Zip Code: 08108
Date Received: 7/18/2016

Comment/Question: Must this money go toward road projects for NJDOT? Can this money not go toward any project that makes life better for pedestrians and people on bikes? Or are cars and roads just always going to be prioritized at the expense of people who get around without a car? I truly hate that NJDOT does that. I never get the feeling that they care about what the experience is of actually living in the communities they operate in.

Response: Thank you for your comment and consideration for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Earmark funds that would be repurposed to two, significant “roadway” projects in our region— I-295/I-76/Route 42 Direct Connection and South Pemberton Road, CR 530, Phase 2— will ensure that our region does not lose the additional funds provided by the earmarks because these projects are ready to obligate the money by Federal deadline and the region has only one chance to decide where the funds would be repurposed. If the region decides to repurpose earmark funds to a project, and that project’s schedule gets delayed beyond the Federal deadline, the region will lose those earmark funds. That is why our region should pick a project that will surely meet the Federal deadline for obligation for the repurposed earmarks.

Further, even though the earmarks are being directed to roadway projects, repurposing earmarks to the two projects noted will free up “regular” federal TIP funds that are currently programmed on those projects, and those “regular” Federal TIP funds will be removed from the projects and used on other projects that may include bicycle/pedestrian improvements. Specifically, repurposing earmarks to the South Pemberton Road project allows the region to fund two new projects that will directly benefit all road users, including pedestrians and bicyclists, as noted in the TIP Action: (1) \$1.141 million for a construction project, CR 561 (Haddon Avenue), Gateway Project, in the City of Camden that will provide new ADA compliant sidewalks, new designated bicycle lanes along both sides of Haddon Avenue from Mt. Ephraim Avenue to Newton Avenue, a landscaped triangle park between Haddon Avenue/Mt. Ephraim Avenue/Pine Street, and streetscape enhancements; and (2) \$1.75 million for a resurfacing project in Deptford Township, Gloucester County along Tanyard Rd (CR 663) from Blackwood Barnsboro Road (CR 603) to Brenner Avenue/Dancy Avenue, which will include pedestrian and bicycle facilities along Tanyard Road, from Salina Road to the frontage of the Loucroft Farms development.

It is worth pointing out that many current TIP projects that may appear to be “roadway only projects” incorporate pedestrian and bicycle improvements, where appropriate. The South Pemberton Road (CR 530) project aims to improve safety due to its high

crash rate, and improvements will include sidewalks for pedestrians and 6 foot wide shoulders along each direction of South Pemberton Road that can adequately and safely accommodate bicyclists. The Direct Connection project is a substantial multi-year, multi-phase project that will address the dangerous weaving movements at I-295, I-76, and Route 42 and had one of the highest accident rates in the State. Other examples include the Hanover Street Bridge over Rancocas Creek in Pemberton Borough, which is a bridge project that will incorporate sidewalks and shoulders. The reconfiguration of Route 38 and South Church Street/Fellowship Road intersection in Moorestown Township will address sidewalk deficiencies. Also listed in the TIP are Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) funded bicycle and pedestrian projects, which include pedestrian safety enhancements along Somerdale Road (CR 678) from Burnt Mill Road (CR 670) to Echelon Road in Voorhees Township, bike share program expansion in Princeton, and construction of a dedicated bicycle and pedestrian trail along the Province Line Road section of the Lawrence-Hopewell Trail in Lawrence Township that will safely take trail users off the busy Quaker Bridge Mall-Route 1 connector road and offer trail access to neighborhoods that are currently cut off from safe bicycling and walking opportunities.

Finally, please note that pedestrian and bicycle safety is one of NJDOT's top priorities. Last summer, NJDOT adopted a State Strategic Highway Safety Plan that is driven by crash data and outlines safety priorities and strategies for where spending should be made in order to save lives. One of the top priority safety emphasis areas is pedestrians and bicyclists, and there are various safety strategies to reduce pedestrian and bicyclist crashes noted in this Plan. There are also policies and programs that NJDOT has implemented to make streets safer for bicyclists and pedestrians, such as the Complete Streets policy. The NJDOT Local Aid and Economic Development division offers a Bikeway Grant Program that provides counties and municipalities funding to promote bicycling as a transportation alternative. There is also a NJDOT Safe Streets to Transit program, which is part of the State's comprehensive Pedestrian Safety Initiative, to improve safety and accessibility to transit facilities and all nodes of public transportation. Other pedestrian/bicycle program funds that are offered by NJDOT include the Safe Routes to School and Transportation Alternatives Programs. For further information, please visit www.state.nj.us/transportation/about/safety and www.state.nj.us/transportation/business/localaid.

NJDOT concurs with this response.

6. Adoption of the DVRPC FY2017-2020 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for Pennsylvania and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Procedures to Amend or Modify the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

From: Bridget Chadwick

County: Montgomery
Zip Code: not provided
Date Received: 7/27/2016

Comment/Question: As you may know, on Sunday July 24, 2016 several thousand people marched from City Hall to Independence Hall. They carried banners and called for a “clean” energy revolution.

Today, not more than 2 city blocks from Independence Hall, you, the Board members take responsibility for infrastructure decisions that will last decades. These decisions should be in step with the professional guidance of DVRPC long-range plans; they should benefit our communities, our economy, and our **environment**. Furthermore, these decisions should be a wise investment of the annual budget, about 1.5 billion dollars per year.

In DVRPC’s long-range plans (e.g. *Connections 2040*) there is a goal to reduce GHG emissions, below the 2005 baseline level, by 50 percent by 2035, 60 percent by 2040, and 80 percent by 2050.

As stated in DVRPC’s 2010 GHG Inventory: “[f]urther reductions will require sustained, concerted, and aggressive action”. The focus, in my opinion, should be on the transportation sector because it is the most problematic: consuming energy with the highest carbon-intensity and emitting more emissions than any other end-use sector (residential, commercial, and industry).

I would like to reiterate 2 recommendations that I’ve made before to the Board:

1. include in the front pages of the Transportation Improvement Program -- an explanation of the GHG targets; and provide a summary of historical data;
2. Transportation improvement projects listed in the TIP should include an assessment of the problem i.e. describe *existing* conditions; and how the *proposed* project will benefit all users of the road: motorists, transit riders, pedestrians and cyclists.

	auto	bus/RAIL	pedestrian	bike
Existing Condition:				
Proposed Improvement:				

I hope that the Board will consider these recommendations - and direct staff to implement them.

Thank you for your consideration. Bridget Chadwick

Response: Thank you for attending the Board meeting today and submitting your comment. Your comment was forwarded to the Board.

Your comment has several components, which we will address one at a time.

The importance of reducing GHG emissions from the transportation sector:

It is important to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) GHG emissions in the transportation sector and GHG reduction targets are in the long-range plan (LRP). As you note, Connections 2040 states:

“The Plan sets a target of reducing 2005 GHG emissions by 50 percent by the year 2035. A 60 percent reduction from 2005 GHG emissions levels by 2040 would keep the region on track to reach an 80 percent reduction by 2050. Achieving this goal will require significant coordinated action at the household, firm, community, regional, state, national, and global level.”

DVRPC’s most recent energy use and GHG emissions inventory (for calendar year 2010) reiterates these goals, notes the reduction in GHG emissions achieved in the region between 2005 and 2010, and states:

“However, continued reductions will require sustained, concerted, and aggressive action at the household, firm, community, regional, state, national, and global level.”

You then note that you believe “[t]he focus . . . should be on the transportation sector...”. As an agency with a primary focus on transportation, DVRPC focuses most of its GHG reduction activities on the transportation sector, working to promote lower carbon fuels, reduce driving, reduce congestions, and help improve access to more energy-efficient and low-carbon transportation options such as public transit, bicycling, and walking.

On August 18, 2016, DVPRC submitted comments in response to a recent Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM). One section of the NPRM stated “The FHWA is seeking comment on whether and how to establish a CO2 emissions measure in the final rule.” DVRPC responded as follows:

“The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), the MPO for the bi-state Greater Philadelphia region, offers the following comment regarding the question of whether a performance measure relating to greenhouse gases (GHG) should be established:

If the nation wishes to achieve a goal of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, then policies need to be established at the national level to measure and reduce GHG emissions in the transportation sector. According to the US EPA, in 2014, 26 percent of the nation’s GHG emissions were from the transportation sector, with 61 percent of that from light duty vehicles and 23 percent from medium- and heavy-duty trucks. Thus,

about 22 percent of the nation's total GHG emissions would potentially be subject to such a measure.

DVRPC has significant experience with measuring GHG emissions from the transportation sector and is confident tools and methodologies can be established at the national level to carry out such measures. However, there are significant questions regarding how the US DOT and US EPA, both of which have key roles in GHG emissions from transportation, can best work together to develop measurement and reporting requirements. In addition, there are significant questions regarding the most appropriate geography for such measurement and reporting. It is critical that any such GHG emissions measure build on the strength and expertise of both MPOs and state DOTs, and develop a clear cooperative approach.

Recommendation: DVRPC supports the concept of developing a transportation sector GHG emissions measure, and suggests a joint US DOT/US EPA taskforce be established to develop such measures. DVRPC further recommends that both state DOTs and MPOs be included as participants in such a task force. DVRPC would be pleased to participate if asked.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the transportation system performance rulemaking.”

Including GHG information in the front pages of the Transportation Improvement Program:

You recommend that DVRPC “include in the front pages of the Transportation Improvement Program -- an explanation of the GHG targets; and provide a summary of historical data”.

DVRPC does not think it is appropriate at this time to include GHG targets and inventory in the text portion of the TIP since there is not a clear set of measures agreed upon between EPA and USDOT as detailed above. There is not yet a correlation between the inventory data and specific projects in the TIP. Please see the most recent GHG inventory, which provides the historical data you reference.

Including an assessment of the problem addressed by each TIP project:

You recommend that “Transportation improvement projects listed in the TIP should include an assessment of the problem i.e. describe existing conditions; and how the proposed project will benefit all users of the road: motorists, transit riders, pedestrians and cyclists.” DVRPC and PennDOT work to provide up-to-date project descriptions with the most appropriate information and will continue to try to make those increasingly meaningful, but please keep in mind that the TIP is a programming document and is not intended to include project management level detail.

Thank you for your continued participation and involvement in region's infrastructure.

This comment has been submitted for record. Please let me know if you have any other questions, my contact information is below.