

# AUGUST 4, 2020 MEETING

## ITEM 4

### STATE COLLEGE AREA CONNECTOR (SCAC) PROJECT

#### **Presentation about Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL) Process PennDOT and SCAC Consultant Team**

On February 13, 2019, Governor Tom Wolf, State Senator Jake Corman, State Representative Kerry Benninghoff, and PennDOT District 2-0 officials announced that \$20 million was being committed to start work on the Preliminary Engineering (PE) phase of the “State College Area Connector” (SCAC) Project (Route 322/144/45 Corridors).

In June 2019, the CCMPO amended the 2019-2022 Centre County Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to include the PE funding. Funding for the PE and Final Design phases is also included on the new 2021-2024 TIP adopted by the CCMPO in June 2020.

In August 2019, PennDOT Engineering District 2-0 retained the consulting firm Michael Baker International to lead the SCAC project management effort. In late February 2020, District 2-0 retained a project design consultant team led by the consulting firm Johnson, Mirmiran & Thompson (JMT) to complete the PE work, which includes completion of a Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL) process, followed by detailed environmental investigations and preliminary engineering/design work.

**No specific alternative improvements for the State College Area Connector project have been developed at this time.** The PEL process and PE phase comprise the first steps in PennDOT’s project development process, and through these steps, the PEL will identify transportation improvements to be advanced for environmental consideration and further design. The PE phase will evaluate the study area’s socio-economic, natural, and cultural resources in detail; develop and evaluate transportation alternatives; identify a preferred alternative; and obtain environmental clearance for the preferred alternative.

PennDOT District 2-0 and the SCAC consultant team will provide a presentation to the Coordinating Committee about the PEL process, including the roles of various participants in that process and the public involvement activities that will be conducted.

Attached is:

- Outline of process and schedule for advancing SCAC project

**The Coordinating Committee should receive the presentation and provide comments to PennDOT and the consultant team.**

Presented by: Lori Cole, AICP, JMT  
Kevin James, P.E., SCAC Project Manager, Michael Baker International  
Dean Ball, P.E., PennDOT District 2-0

Action: Comments to PennDOT and SCAC consultant team.

## What is the Process for Advancing Transportation Projects?

Transportation projects advance through five-phases before they are able to be used by the traveling public. Click on each icon to learn more about the various phases.



**Planning and Environmental Linkage Study** – A PEL Study is a high-level, early-planning study process to transportation decision making that considers environmental, community, and economic goals early in the planning stage, resulting in projects that can be carried through design and construction. Public and agency involvement is conducted throughout this phase. Overall, the PEL Study helps to inform planning decisions, streamline the project delivery process, and can serve as a way for the public to discuss and prioritize transportation issues.



**Preliminary Engineering (PE)/Environmental Studies (NEPA)** – Preliminary engineering includes focused studies about traffic, safety, the environment, and the development of project alternatives. The information collected helps FHWA and PennDOT make decisions about the specific improvements that are needed to improve the transportation network. Assessments are also conducted to determine the benefits and impacts the alternatives would have on natural, cultural, and socio-economic environments. Public and agency involvement is conducted through this phase. The preliminary engineering/environmental studies phase ends with the selection of an alternative to advance into final design. Approval from FHWA must be received at the end of the preliminary engineering (PE)/environmental studies phase prior to advancing into final engineering design.



**Final Engineering Design** – During final engineering design, the selected project alternative design plans are refined to identify right-of-way requirements and are detailed enough to construct the project. Mitigation commitments will also be implemented. Environmental permitting and detailed utility coordination will occur during this phase.



**Right-of-Way Acquisition** – When project impacts to private property including homes and business are unavoidable, PennDOT will determine the Fair Market Value and negotiate the acquisition of property within the required right-of-way. When the acquisition of property results in the need for a property owner to relocate, PennDOT provides relocation assistance to those whose property is acquired (See the FAQ page for information on acquisition).



**Construction** – Once final engineering design is complete, and the right-of-way has been acquired, PennDOT will solicit bids and award construction contracts. Depending on the scale of the proposed improvements, multiple contracts may be developed to construct the overall project. Often, the first contracts awarded are smaller “early action” contracts that involve improvements that will help better accommodate traffic during subsequent construction projects. Staging of the subsequent contracts will also be developed to safely convey traffic through the work zone and minimize travel time delays through and around the project area. Upon completion of the project, the needs and concerns identified in the early stages of the process will have been addressed by the newly constructed improvements to the transportation system.

### What is the Anticipated Schedule?

