

Blair County Planning Commission

2018 Annual Report

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Blair County Residents,

On behalf of Blair Planning, I am pleased to present our 2018 Annual Report.

During the past year, we have continued our efforts in five primary areas. First, was the adoption of the regional comprehensive plan, *Alleghenies Ahead*. Implementation of the plan is now underway for each of the five major goal areas: Agriculture, Broadband, Collaboration, Housing, and Public Health. An update on this plan is presented beginning on page five. In hand with the comprehensive plan, the second major effort is the hazard mitigation plan, known as BRAVE. This plan identifies and profiles the major hazards facing Blair County and proposes mitigation measures to ameliorate their effects. An update appears on page thirteen.

Our three ongoing foci include our public health initiatives, transportation planning, and development reviews. We continue to expand WalkWorks throughout the county and wrapped up the Healthiest County Challenge in mid-2018. The year saw major progress and funding for Allegheny Township's recreation efforts, several active transportation projects, and the first phase of the Route 22 project in the Canoe Creek area, including a linkage extending the Lower Trail into Canoe Creek. Our stable growth pattern continued in 2018, with the bulk of activity focused in the core areas. Development statistics appear on pages eighteen and nineteen.

Other activities undertaken in the past year include a greater community presence and outreach strategy, rollout of a call-based translation service for those with limited English proficiency to all municipalities, and working with the Census on some preparation projects for the 2020 census, and a number of smaller planning assistance projects with our municipalities.

As we move into 2019, we are excited to implement *Alleghenies Ahead* and continuing our planning efforts as an investment in the future of our beautiful county.

Looking Forward,

Dennis Hammel
Board Member

Blair Planning Staff Listing

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We're on the Web!

www.blairplanning.org

We're on Facebook!

<https://www.facebook.com/Blair-County-Planning-Commission-1615307782052150/>

Overview of the Blair County Planning Commission

The Blair County Planning Commission (BCPC) is a nine member board that consists of three members representing the City of Altoona, three members representing the townships collectively, and three members representing the boroughs collectively.

The Planning Commission meets monthly to review proposed subdivisions and land developments, as well as to discuss any other planning issue that affects Blair County and its constituent municipalities.

Tentative upcoming meeting dates for BCPC are listed below:

2019 Blair County Planning Commission Meeting Dates and Times

Date*	Time	Location
March 28, 2019	8:30 AM	Altoona City Water Authority
April 25, 2019	8:30 AM	Altoona City Water Authority
May 30, 2019	8:30 AM	Altoona City Water Authority
June 27, 2019	8:30 AM	Altoona City Water Authority
July 25, 2019	8:30 AM	Altoona City Water Authority
August 29, 2019	8:30 AM	Altoona City Water Authority
September 26, 2019	8:30 AM	Altoona City Water Authority
October 31, 2019	8:30 AM	Altoona City Water Authority
December 12, 2019	4:30 PM	Fort Roberdeau



2018 Board of Directors

Name	Term	Other Public Office
Bill Hall, Chairman	2020	Tyrone Borough Authority, Chairman
Herb Shelow, Secretary	2022	Bellwood Borough Council President
Jim Dixon, Treasurer	2020	Altoona City Planning Commission Member
Patrick Baechle	2021	Past Hollidaysburg Planning Commission Member
Vincent DiLeo	2021	Altoona Drug & Crime Commission
Dennis Hammel	2020	Williamsburg Borough Council
Randy Isenberg	2022	Altoona City Planning Commission Member
Ben Postles	2021	Williamsburg Community SD Board Member
Linda Smith	2022	Blair County Board of Assessment Appeals

Blair County Planning Commission 2018 Financial Report

While the rest of the Annual Report focuses on a calendar year, the fiscal year for Blair Planning runs from July 1 to June 30. This statement reflects the status as of June 30, 2018. The major sources of income for the 2018 fiscal year were local support (municipal and county), transportation funding, and emergency management funding. Although down slightly, we still had a strong year for development reviews. Our major expense is employee compensation, accounting for 68% of expenses. We continue to maintain an emergency line of credit (currently with a zero balance and up to \$50,000 available) and a stabilization fund (currently about \$50,500) in the unlikely event they will be needed.



2018 Financial Statement

Ordinary Income/Expense

Income

Transportation	298,900.03
Community Development	31,800.00
Planning	102,137.23
Miscellaneous (includes stabilization fund interest)	689.99

Total Income

433,527.25

Expense

Personnel	292,128.93
Operating	97,340.10
Contract	42,275.00
Uncollectable Funds	0.00

Total Expense

431,744.03

Net Result

1,783.22

Academic Collaboration

Blair Planning is pleased to continue its support of students studying topics relevant to regional planning. Over the years, we have had several interns with us, and now we are expanding our student outreach to include entire classes in projects identified within our county that fit well with established course work or degree requirements. This gives our young people added practical experience within the controlled settings of their academic environments so they are better equipped when they enter the work force upon graduation. This past year we have had four great class experiences.

First, we were pleased to work with two classes at South Hills School of Business. The first assisted in our community outreach, particularly our online efforts. The students analyzed our limited use of online media and developed a strategy for outreach and engagement based on use patterns, our stated mission and goals, and available staff time. This was presented to the Blair County Planning Commission board members at a regular meeting and in written form to the staff for implementation.

The other South Hills class was engaged in countywide recreation marketing in conjunction with the Healthy Blair County Coalition. The tangible result is an Active Living Brochure and apps that encourage us to engage in active choices and make us aware of the facilities already in place throughout the county. We have provided an outlet for this app and brochure at www.blairplanning.org/active-living.



Also, we engaged Penn State students on two environmentally-oriented projects. Last spring, students undertook a study of the Canoe Creek State Park to determine the feasibility of converting the power source to solar. Students analyzed the building and infrastructure needs and calculated the amount of power needed as well as the space required for the necessary solar equipment. These findings were presented to both the Blair County Planning Commission board at a regular meeting as well as to Canoe Creek State Park management. A final written report has also been provided, and the findings are being considered in the strategic plan for the park.



The other project is focused on trail stabilization at Chimney Rocks Park. This project spans the fall and spring semesters and is ongoing. At the close of the fall semester, the students provided an interim report of their findings to Blair Planning and municipal officials with an eye toward the culmination of the project this April. We are looking forward to the report as it will help municipal officials in the maintenance and preservation of this well-loved community asset.



We look forward to continued relationships with both the South Hills School (SCC) of Business and as Penn State's Sustainable Communities Collaborative Initiative as we identify additional projects. The SCC initiative connects Penn State faculty, students, and staff with local communities to address sustainability challenges through an engaged collaborative effort. Any municipal or quasi-municipal project is eligible; please contact us if you have one for consideration.

Online Access

As part of our general outreach efforts and our federal Title VI requirements, Blair Planning is on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram! Please like us on Facebook at 'Blair Planning', 'Metropolitan Planning Organization MPO for Blair County Altoona MSA', and 'Blair WalkWorks' and follow us on twitter at 'Blair Planning'. Don't forget to visit www.blairplanning.org as we continue to evolve this new (for us) line of communication!



Alleghenies Ahead: Shared Strategies for a Stronger Region

In July, the Blair County Commissioners adopted a new comprehensive plan entitled *Alleghenies Ahead: Shared Strategies for a Stronger Region*. Each of the other five counties in the Southern Alleghenies region had also adopted the plan, and we are now working together to implement the plan. We had given an update on the development of the plan last year. This year we will focus on each of the five major goal elements for Blair County.

A side note: We have gotten the question several times regarding specific projects or issues that are not covered in the *Alleghenies Ahead* project but had been called out in either the previous (2007) plan or other prior planning documents. These projects are generally still supported, however the *Alleghenies Ahead* document, in utilizing the implementable plan approach, places our primary focus on the goal areas discussed therein. Projects in other published planning documents that are not contradicted by a subsequent vote or policy are still considered 'consistent' with county planning efforts and will be so noted on requests for support of grants, loans, and permit applications.



Broadband and Cellular Service. Adequate internet speeds are essential to competing in the 21st Century, connecting otherwise isolated areas to a global economy. Broadband and cellular services that are reliable and high quality are essential to economic competitiveness and even public safety – and anecdotes abound about their shortcomings in the Southern Alleghenies. For younger households and most businesses today, access to high speed internet and reliable cell service is an expectation not unlike electricity. Places that don't have it cannot be competitive.

Progress on this regional priority requires long-term coordination to determine appropriate action steps and oversee their implementation. To this end, a regional Broadband Task Force has been established through the Southern Alleghenies Planning and Development Commission to inventory our current system, explore potential solutions to improve the network, and implement projects and partnerships to get it done. The Blair County Planning Commission has designated this task force as the implementation committee for this issue in Blair County.

The task force has divided itself into subparts, each focusing on a part of the problem. These committees focus on outreach to communities and companies, funding for projects, technological issues, and mapping. The task force is seeking initially to identify a pilot project or two within the region to demonstrate ability and feasibility, and is hoping to accomplish the task for greatly reduced cost through partnerships, colocation, and technology.

We are excited that efforts to bring full broadband service to the region are underway and are looking forward to the pilot projects in 2019.

Alleghenies Ahead: Shared Strategies for a Stronger Region



Collaboration and Coordination. The region's ability to implement its priorities and maintain critical assets is tied to how well a variety of partners work together. Many issues cut across municipal boundaries and require productive working relationships between multiple entities and sectors. Retirements, looming labor force shortages, and stagnant tax bases make partnerships and structural change not only desirable but necessary. Collaborations that bring together the expertise and resources of multiple communities and sectors makes implementation of almost any initiative more likely to happen and more likely to succeed over time.

Through this goal, we seek service improvements or savings brought about reaching across borders or functional classifications to enhance marketability, responsiveness, and return on investment to taxpayers. The Blair County Action Plan does not call for municipal mergers. The Blair County Planning Commission has designated the Policy Committee of the Blair County Chamber of Commerce as its implementing committee for this goal.

The committee is seeking to find and share local and regional best practices in problem solving and service delivery. It is also identifying the costs and benefits of consolidating services and cost savings. As the similar work item in the Hazard Mitigation Plan come online in the latter half of 2019, the committee will work to keep both elements coordinated.

Another major work item in the action plan is to consider the potential effectiveness of converting the Government Advisory Committee into a full Council of Governments and offer to consolidate regional governmental services under the new COG. This would provide cost savings by eliminating duplicative overhead for contracted services, utilities, and administrative overhead. Work on this is preliminary and will be continued in the coming year.



Agriculture. The region's single largest active land use, agriculture plays a significant role in the development of a diverse local food economy. It involves everything from dairy and other commodity farming that serves national and international markets, to organic farms that serve local and regional niches. Rural agricultural townships and the boroughs that service them are facing some of the most acute struggles to fill decision-making boards and fund investments in aging infrastructure.

The action plan seeks to increase the number of agricultural acres preserved, and to enhance the local food economy and its overall role in the regional economy. It seeks to diversify the agricultural sector to lessen its vulnerabilities as well as capitalize on emerging technologies and practices. The Blair County Planning Commission has designated the Agriculture Committee of the Altoona-Blair County Development Corporation as the implementation committee for this goal.

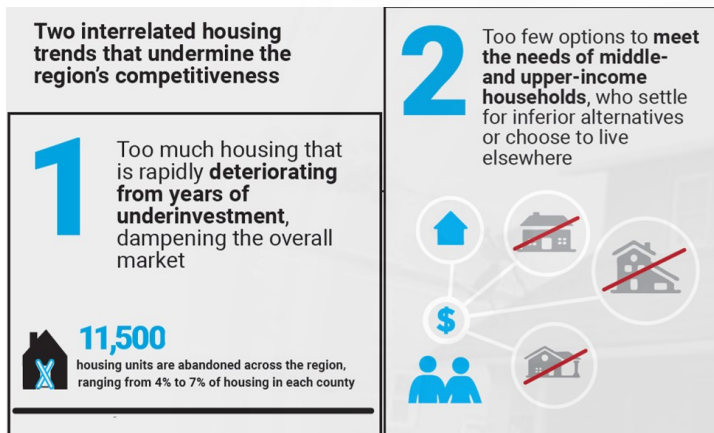
This action plan contains six different items, and the committee has been aggressively attacking the first three. Some of these items are closely related to items under the public health goal, so coordination is essential. There have been several promotional events in the past year relative to local food in our local markets as well as farmer's markets and continuation of previous activities supporting our largest local industry.

Work continues on making Altoona an agricultural hub to promote local food in local markets and local restaurants. We are excited to see the further development of this element in the coming year. Other action items for agriculture include an agricultural worker placement agency, supporting agricultural easement purchases, and providing access to capital and expertise for farmers specifically for technological advancements and innovative agricultural practices.

Alleghenies Ahead: Shared Strategies for a Stronger Region



Housing and Blight. Blighted and chronically vacant properties are a drag on the market and limit the levels of investment in new or existing housing stock. Part of attracting and retaining households with skilled workers today is having high-quality, move-in ready housing units that match modern needs. But high-quality rentals are hard to find in the region, and there are 4,700 fewer homes valued at over \$150,000 than households that can afford them – suggesting that many families settle for inferior options. Stimulating the production of new market-rate housing is critical for the region's competitiveness. But very few communities have the resources or expertise to do this on their own.



This represents a shift in the approach to housing in this region. We have normally focused on providing affordable housing and blight removal. However, the planning process identified a gap in market-rate housing for upper-middle income families as well as a lack of choice in housing type. These two issues combined have the effect of dampening the available workforce as people entering this market have little or no real housing choices within the county and choose to live elsewhere.

The Action Plan calls for the development of a financial model to incentivize market rate housing of various types for the \$125-\$250K income market. As urban living is the preferred choice for many buyers, the program will also

find ways to focus on rehabilitated units and infill development, possibly with municipal financing incentives and tax abatement tools already available in the municipal toolbox.

As of the close of the year, no implementation committee has been formed for this goal set. In keeping with the collaboration element of the plan, the Blair County Planning Commission had been looking at existing committees to fill the role, but none are quite suited for this new focus. The BCPC is working with ABCD Corporation to create a new committee to carry out the responsibilities in the Action Plan relative to housing.



Public Health. Quality of life is closely tied to a population's health and well-being. Health outcomes are poor in much of the region and drug abuse has emerged as one of the major health threats to residents from all walks of life. This affects overall well-being as well as labor force engagement and family stability. And traditional tools in the region are critical to achieving this. But so are quality of life factors that convince entrepreneurs or skilled workers to choose one region over another to live and start a small business with the potential to become something bigger.

The Alleghenies Ahead goal seeks to build on and support the successful efforts of the Healthy Blair County Coalition in moving our county health rankings into fairer territory and continue to mobilize the population into active lifestyles for overall better health. As such, the Blair County Planning Commission designated the Coalition Steering Committee as the implementation committee for the public health elements of the plan.

A major focus of the public health is active living. As of year end, staff was formulating the creation of a committee that would span the work elements of the comprehensive plan the requirements of the MPO's Unified Planning Work Program, and the efforts of the Healthy Blair County Coalition to develop and implement an active living plan that will include focus areas, facility locations, community integration, and basic standards for active living. These efforts will also support the Vision Zero and Complete Streets positions taken by the organization in 2017.

Alleghenies Ahead: Shared Strategies for a Region

What is active living? It encompasses a broad spectrum of issues that come together to positively affect individual and community health. Physical elements such as trails, bicycle lanes, sidewalks, walkways, and river access all play a role in keeping us healthy. We regularly receive feedback from visitors and former residents that our county is severely lacking in these elements and this lack is a significant factor in decisions to leave or not visit. More than those physical elements, we need to look at development patterns to see how we make changes to our landscape plays a role in a sedentary or active lifestyle. Social elements also factor in, such as neighbor interactions, children playing outside, non-scholastic sports leagues, and similar elements. These elements cut across multiple disciplines including economic development, recreation, education, transportation, environmental stewardship, public health, and tourism.

Another major element that was started in 2018 was the sustainability of the Healthy Blair County Coalition. This coalition is made of myriad organizations and individuals concerned with the state of residents general health in our county. It is operating well and has accomplished much in the decade it has operated. While there is no known immediate danger of decline in the work of the Coalition, the plan recognizes the significant contributions the group has made to the health of the people of Blair County and calls for efforts to be sure they continue. This process is started and will continue into 2019.

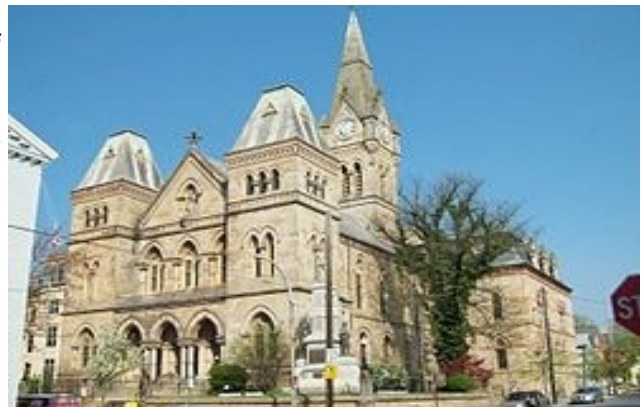
Many opportunities will continue to present themselves as we embark on this new direction and planning methodology for the county. We are continually seeking people and organizations to assist in the implantation of the works elements and those who want to have a positive influence on the future of the county. Those interested in a role in implementing Alleghenies Ahead should feel free to contact Dave at the planning office.

Blair Planning Structure and Local Share Update

Blair Planning is not a county department. We are an independent organization with the County and each of the twenty-five municipalities as 'shareholders' which each pay an annual local share to support the local activities of the organization and match grants that benefit us regionally. The organization is made of three principal elements: the Government Advisory Committee, which is essentially the board of shareholders and gives direction to the other two entities; the Blair County Planning Commission, which operates primarily under the Municipalities Planning Code and conducts general planning; and the Altoona Metropolitan Planning Organization, which operates under 23 USC and undertakes transportation planning for the Altoona MSA, which is the same as the county boundary.

In the spring, we asked our contributors about changes to how the local share is calculated. Currently, we calculate on a straight per capita basis based on the last decennial census numbers. This is the method that has been in place since the Section 701 Program was replaced by the CDBG Program, but some feel the extremes (least populated and most populated) are pulling further apart and the methodology should be reconsidered. Several alternatives have been studied including using total land area, road miles, total assessed property value, equal contribution, or a combination of these.

Based on the discussions we had, we are considering either maintaining the straight per capita basis or making a percentage an equal contribution with the balance based on per capita shares. This would balance the extremes a bit but not make a change that is untested and potentially cause financial difficulties. Any change will likely wait until the new Census 2020 figures are released for implementation, and will take into account any addition of services such as a county-wide flood administrator.



Regional Operations Plan

Attended four meetings for the update of the Central Regions Regional Operations Plan at PennDOT District 9-0 that includes Intelligent Transportation Systems message boards, television monitoring at certain intersections, and traffic incident notification to increase safety and reduce traffic congestion.

Highway Performance Monitoring

The BCPC collected data for PennDOT on 96 state and municipal owned liquid fuel roadways and attended Highway Performance Monitoring training. The data collected is used to assess federal-aid roadways and set federal funding levels.



Title VI of the Civil Rights Act Requirements

Met with J. Bartash, PennDOT Bureau of Equal Opportunity, regarding Title VI and Environmental Justice Requirements and the planning commission adopted nondiscrimination procedures.

Regional planner made maps of low income and racial minorities overlaid with draft 2019 TIP projects for FHWA. In addition, the transportation planner informed the environmental justice groups of the draft 2019 TIP, updated the MPOs Self Certification Resolution and planning process description and submitted with the 2019 TIP projects.

Other BCPC/MPO Transportation Activities in 2018

- Signed acknowledgement of cooperative development of public transit performance data with Blair Senior Services, Inc.
- Mailed letters to ABCD Corp., Blair County Chamber, and the City of Altoona requesting comments on the Park Avenue Connector Project in the long range transportation plan.
- Planners attended the PennDOT Planner Partners Annual Meeting in State College, PA.
- Notified Blair Clearfield Association for the Blind, Skills, and others regarding PennDOT's request for 5310 applications for small vans and buses.
- Administratively approved including three rail crossing projects in the 2019 TIP.
- Reviewed 5 rail freight assistance applications for areawide planning.
- Attended FHWA's Planning Grant Management workshop at PennDOT Dist. 9-0.
- Consulted with the County of Blair for an update of its bridge priorities.



Metropolitan Planning Organization for Blair County (Altoona MSA)

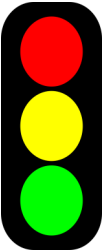
To comply with the Federal Aid Act of 1962, the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) was formed in 1965 to provide a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive process that certifies the county as eligible to receive federal transportation funds for highways, bridges, and public transit. The MPO board contains appointed officials representing PennDOT, Amtran, and the airport, and elected local officials representing the County and the municipalities. As it plans for transportation improvements, the board involves the public, environmental justice and business communities, and state and federal legislators.

The Blair County Planning Commission (BCPC) performs ongoing administrative and transportation planning tasks for the MPO by convening MPO meetings and improvement preparing meeting

notices, agendas, minutes, and meeting other state and federal planning requirements. Along with this work, the BCPC coordinates with municipalities for projects to include for funding in the transportation program/12 Year Program, informs municipalities of Local Technical Assistance Program Courses, and helps municipalities apply for funding through these PennDOT programs:

- Multimodal Transportation Fund
- Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (formerly Transportation Enhancements)
- Green Light-Go (traffic signal upgrades)
- Automated Red Light Enforcement Program (traffic signal or roadway capacity upgrades and pedestrian safety im-

Notable tasks for the MPO in 2018 were the adoption of the 2019 Transportation Improvement Program, approving statewide performance measures, addressing the request to remove the Park Avenue Connector from the long range plan, and approving the 50% local match for the District to apply for federal funding made available from the Secretary of PennDOT for maintenance of ITS infrastructure devices: \$240,000 for retrofits to three existing permanent dynamic message signs along US Route 22, Old Route 22, and I-99 and \$1,020,000 for three new dynamic messaging signs along I-99.



Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)/12 Year Program



Approved by the MPO in June of 2018, the 2019-2010 TIP contains \$47.4 million for highways and bridges that included three new local bridges: the 5th Avenue Bridge over Mill Run in the City, County Bridge #67 on Loop Road in Frankstown Township, and

County Bridge #33 over Mill Run in Logan Township.

In November, the MPO approval included three more local bridges in the TIP: the Coleridge Avenue Bridge in the City of Altoona with TIP funds and the Kladder Station

County Bridge #82 in Blair Township and County Bridge #70 on Bedford Street in Greenfield Township using Act 89 Roadmap Funds. For a complete listing of TIP projects, please contact the BCPC.

PennDOT Connects

On December 19, 2016 the Pennsylvania Secretary of Transportation announced the PennDOT Connects Process, whose goal is to involve local government early in the project process so that community needs, where appropriate, can be addressed with each transportation project. In 2018, the staff attended a PennDOT Connects meeting for municipalities at PennDOT District 9-0 in February, a statewide workshop in May and a statewide P&E 360 training for Municipal Officials in August.

The City of Altoona's downtown 10th Avenue Study, which is to begin this year, is being funded with PennDOT Connects funds, which the BCPC helped the City apply for through the MPO.

Since one of the goals of PennDOT Connects is to improve community quality of life by including facilities for walking and bicycling

in projects with the right context, the following pedestrian projects were included as part of larger projects:

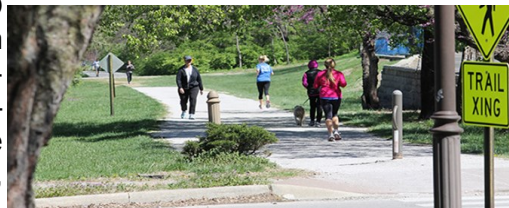
- ◆ Rt. 36/Union Ave. Bridge - sidewalks over the bridge and a crosswalk across Union Ave.
- ◆ US 22 Duncansville Parking Restrictions—13th St. and Sunbrook Dr. crosswalks and sidewalks along US Route 22 (2018)
- ◆ US 22/7th St. Intersection Improvement—crosswalks and sidewalks at the intersection in Duncansville Borough (2018)
- ◆ 17th/Valley View/Pleasant Valley Blvds — 17th Street and Pleasant Valley Blvd. crosswalks with audible pedestrian signals and countdown timers

- ◆ Newry Bridge over Poplar Run—sidewalks on bridge and along Old 220 in Blair Township and Newry Borough (2018)
- ◆ US 22 and Frankstown Road Intersection — crosswalks



Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program

The Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program is a federally funded program that comes through PennDOT and the MPO for projects that build pedestrian and bicycle facilities, improve access to public transportation, create safe routes to school, preserve historic transportation structures, provide environmental mitigation, create trails that serve a transportation purpose, while promoting safety and mobility.



BCPC informed the municipalities and school districts of the application period for PennDOT's 2018 Transportation Alternative Set-Aside Program and MPO recommended the Logan Valley Streetcar Trail in Antis Township and Bellwood Borough \$875,780 for the trail construction. PennDOT awarded the project funding in 2018.

Multimodal Transportation Fund

The BCPC informed the municipalities about the open application periods for PennDOT and DCED's Multimodal Transportation Fund Programs and drafted a support letter for the City of Altoona's previous Multimodal Transportation Fund application. Blair County's first multimodal transportation fund project is the shared use path/trail from Canoe Creek State Park to the Lower Trail that includes County and Township funds.



Bicycle Planning Activities

- Staff completed the Walking and Bicycling survey for the Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and notified the Center for Independent Living, the City of Altoona, and others. The BCPC also forwarded notice of the Statewide Bicycle/Pedestrian Master Plan Update meeting to these stakeholders.



- Attended the September 11 National Memorial Trail opening event at the Canal Basin Park.
- Attended a PennDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinators Meeting by phone.
- Reviewed bicycle parking and distance of the ingress for the Puritan Mills development in the City of Altoona.
- Drafted letter to DCNR to support Antis Township's 2018 Trail Program grant application.
- Invited the Blair Bicycle Club to attend a meeting at PennDOT District 9-0 on how to submit Bicycle Route Inventory Forms for District's Bicycle Route Inventory Project on June 1.
- Drafted a letter to DCNR in support of Hollidaysburg Borough's application for bicycle parking.

- Met with 3 bike club members and Logan Township Planning Director to discuss bicycle route signing to Horseshoe Curve.
- Attended a meeting with Blair Bicycle Club members to prepare a list of bicycle routes for PennDOT District 9's Bicycle Route Inventory.
- Attended a meeting with Blair Bicycle Club members, the City's planning director and mayor regarding proposed bicycle routes and funding.
- Regional planner used shape files from PennDOT to map the Blair Bicycle Club's routes.
- Met with members of the Blair Bicycle Club and T. Meek, of the Centre Regional Planning Agency regarding what it takes to be a bicycle friendly community.
- Planners attended a Trail Town Workshop for the September 9/11 Trail.
- Planners attended a meeting at ABCD Corp. about extending the Logan Valley Streetcar Trail.

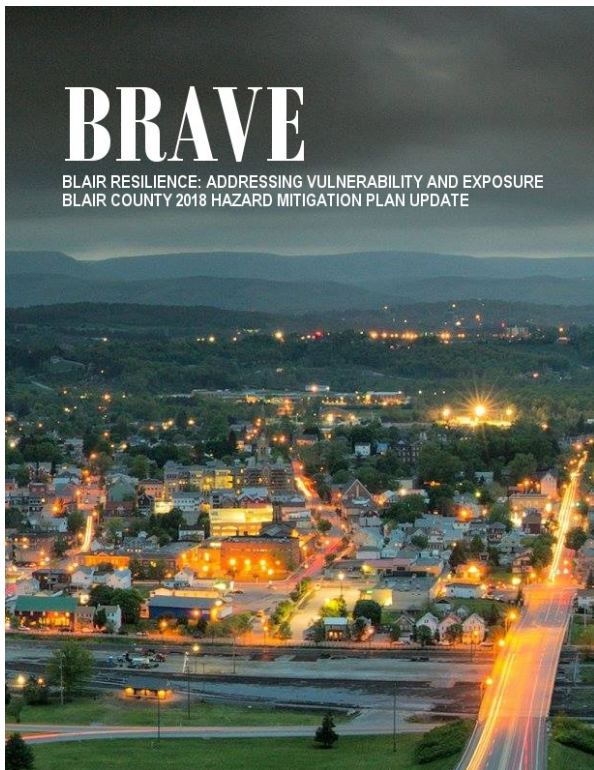


BRAVE: Hazard Mitigation Plan

The Disaster Management Act of 2000 requires governments at all levels to adopt a hazard mitigation plan every five years to identify hazards within the community and develop mitigation strategies to deal with those hazards. The last update for Blair County was in 2013. In 2018, Blair Planning completed the substantive portion of the update process for the plan update, entitled *BRAVE / Blair Resilience: Addressing Vulnerability & Exposure*.

Our current (2013) plan focused primarily on flooding and community outreach. It has been mostly implemented with a few exceptions that are outside local control. *BRAVE* will build on that progress and momentum.

Five natural hazards and five human-induced hazards were identified in the planning process as well as a strong concern on our capacity to deliver emergency services in the county. These will all be profiled in the plan document with discussion on their impacts on Blair County and its municipalities.



Based on the public outreach and committee meetings, the following ranked as the top five concerns for natural hazards and for human –induced hazards:

NATURAL	HUMAN-INDUCED
Flooding	Transportation Accidents
Strong Storms	Pandemic
Drought	Clandestine Lab
Extreme Temperatures	Utility Interruption
Invasive Species	Domestic Terrorism

In the spring of 2018, staff visited each of the municipalities to interview them regarding the hazards and resiliency needs they each saw within their respective jurisdictions as related to the hazards identified above. Some common themes arose, which have

been included as county-wide action items, while others were more municipality-specific. These will be listed as action items for those municipalities that identified them.

Once again, flooding and flood issues came to the top of the list, and these will be included in a countywide plan that the individual municipalities can draw on. There was concern on the effects of flood insurance on property values and affordability. We are encouraging property owners with land in the floodplain but who are fairly sure the permanent structures will go through a property survey to make a firm determination on the base flood elevation and the elevation(s) of the lowest floor(s) of the permanent structure(s). This can greatly reduce flood insurance liability and potentially eliminate the regulatory need for it.

A second major issue relative to flooding was the need of a countywide floodplain administrator. The feeling was nearly unanimous that such a service is needed, and those that weren't strongly supportive for themselves were not opposed if it would be helpful to others. We have begun looking into the various possibilities of making this service available countywide while keeping costs as low as possible.

Blair Resilience: Addressing Vulnerability & Exposure (BRAVE)



The plan is modeled on the expected format for a local hazard mitigation plan for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA). We have profiled each of the hazards identified in the state hazard mitigation plan with a Blair County focus, with an emphasis on those identified in the table above as the 'priority' needs in Blair County. Additionally, the format requires a review and consideration of local capacity relative to hazard mitigation, response, and recovery. Capacity issues were brought up during the public outreach process and the municipal interviews and those discussions are presented in the plan document. The capacity issue dovetails seamlessly with the broadband and the cooperation and coordination work elements in the recently-adopted comprehensive plan. Work on hazard capacity will be done under the auspices of both plans to create a robust response to the concerns identified in the development of the hazard mitigation plan. The concerns specifically centered on a lack of personnel for emergency response; lack of financial resources for

training, equipment, and maintenance; an excess of administration for a county of 125,000 population; lack of wireless and communication services outside the core area and along the interstate corridor; and a concern that the hazard mitigation planning process leans too heavily on emergency responders to the exclusion of others.

Once approved by PEMA and FEMA, the plan must be adopted locally by the County and participating municipalities. We expect this to occur in the spring of 2019. Once adopted, we will engage the municipalities to begin implementation of the plan and to apply for any grants and programs to further the goals of the plan.

Census 2020 Preparations

As 2020 approaches, the Census has been reaching out to county planning departments to prepare for the decennial census. One of the outreach efforts is the Local Update of Census Addresses which is done to ensure people are counted in the municipality in which they actually live. This time around, the Census Bureau implemented a system called Geographic Update Partnership Software (GUPS) to assist in the update.

Unfortunately for many localities, including us, the GUPS system did not perform as expected. The Census Bureau was aware of the problems and accommodated as best they could within the time constraints placed by the calendar—April 1, 2020 is fixed and the preparation time table requires many tasks prior to that date. The unexpected performance issues adversely affected us as we assisted municipalities with the update. We focused on boundary areas and multi-family dwellings as these were the primary interests of the Census Bureau, and general addressing should have been completed with the 2000 and 2010 decennial censuses.

A number of municipalities expressed frustration over the Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) process this time around. We shared that frustration as did a number of those we work with at the Census Bureau. We apologize for that frustration and hope the 2030 LUCA goes much better.

Additionally, the Census annually sends out a Boundary and Annexation Survey (BAS) to all municipalities. A consolidated survey is available by designating the county to do this work. In April, we asked each municipality if they would like us to undertake the BAS each year, all but one agreed, so we will do this each year in the future.



Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP)

Register for 2019 LTAP Courses!

The PennDOT Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) program was created to share transportation knowledge, improve road maintenance and safety skills, and put research and new technology into practice at the municipal level. The Southern Alleghenies Planning and Development Commission schedules the classes for the region and Blair Planning helps provide LTAP information to the Blair County municipalities.

What is the Roads Scholar Program?

Offered by the Pennsylvania Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP), the Roads Scholar Program provides an opportunity for municipal employees to be trained by LTAP's professional team in the latest road-related technologies and innovations.

The Road Scholar I program provides a professional certification to municipal employees and officials who attend LTAP workshops within a three-year period.

For Roads Scholar I:

- Complete 10 approved Roads Scholar I courses within a three-year period
- Pass (70% or higher) an in-class quiz taken at the end of each course

For Roads Scholar II:

- Complete 8 approved Roads Scholar II courses within a three year period
- Pass (70% or higher) an in-class quiz taken at the end of each course

To register for a class, visit the LTAP website at:

<https://www.dot7.state.pa.us/ltap>

or contact

Janice Streightiff at

(814) 949-6523 or

streightiff@sapdc.org

Please register no later than
one week in advance.



2019 Schedule of Blair County LTAP Courses

Upcoming Courses	Course Date	Course Location
Drainage: The Keys to Roads that Last	March 12, 2019 Road Scholar I	Martinsburg Borough Building
Signs & Safety Features for Bridges & Culverts	April 16, 2019 Road Scholar I	Antis Township Municipal Building
Traffic Signs Basics	April 30, 2019 Road Scholar I	Southern Alleghenies Planning & Development Commission
Work Zone (Temporary) Traffic Control	May 21, 2019 Road Scholar I	Southern Alleghenies Planning & Development Commission
ADA Transition Plans & Self Evaluations	July 9, 2019 Road Scholar II	Logan Township Municipal Building
Stormwater Facility Operation & Maintenance	August 2, 2019 Road Scholar I	Shirley Township, Shireysburg, PA
Snow & Salt Management	Sept 17, 2019 Road Scholar II	Hoss's Steak & Sea House Duncansville
Asphalt Roads: Common Maintenance Problems	Sept. 18, 2019 Road Scholar II	East St. Clair Twp., New Paris, PA



WalkWorks

In 2018, the Blair Planning was busy implementing and holding kick-off events for five new WalkWorks routes in Blair County. These include routes in Bellwood Borough, Roaring Spring Borough, Tunnelhill/Gallitzin Boroughs, Martinsburg Borough, and Greenfield Township.

The PA WalkWorks Program is an initiative implemented in partnership with the University Of Pittsburgh Graduate School Of Public Health Center for Public Health Practice with the goal to improve the health of Pennsylvania residents.

The purpose of WalkWorks is to increase opportunities for physical activity, by creating a network of fun, fact-filled, community-based walking routes and walking groups.

The goal of WalkWorks is to identify and promote safe walking routes. In order to accomplish this task Blair Planning worked with local communities to identify potential routes and conduct a walkability assessment of these areas to make recommendations for existing conditions and to make the potential routes more pedestrian friendly.

During 2018, Blair Planning established five new WalkWorks routes. All five routes are less than two miles in length and are located in notable areas of the Boroughs and Townships. The Bellwood Route named the David Miller Memorial Walk runs

between Myers Elementary and the Bellwood-Antis Community Park, the Roaring Spring Borough route named the Bare Trail goes by the Duck Pond and the YMCA, the Greenfield Township route named Claysburg's Past & Present Walk starts and ends at the community park, the Martinsburg Borough named the Martinsburg History Hike route runs by the Village at Morri-



sons Cove and Morrison Cove Memorial Park, and the Tunnelhill/Gallitzin Borough route named the Allegheny Mountain Magic Walk starts and ends at the Gallitzin Tunnels Park & Museum.

Although the PA WalkWorks Program ended, Blair Planning hopes to encourage walking and in turn a healthier lifestyle for Blair County through expansion of the Walk-

Works program in other communities in the County.

For the spring of 2019, Blair Planning is excited to announce a new route at Lakemont Park as part of Lakemont Park's renovations and re-invention to a community friendly family park. A kick-off event for the Lakemont Park route will be held at the grand opening event on Memorial Day May 27, 2019 at Lakemont Park. Please join us in welcoming our newest route to the PA WalkWorks family!



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

For more information on WalkWorks, please see the following:

<http://www.blairco.org/Planning/Pages/WalkWorks.aspx>

Or on Facebook at Blair WalkWorks

Healthiest Communities Challenge



The National Association of Counties (NACo) partnered with the Aetna Foundation and the American Public Health Association (APHA) on a \$1.5 million prize competition, the Healthiest Cities & Counties Challenge (the Challenge). The challenge aims to improve measurable health outcomes and promote health, wellness, equity and social interaction through practical, evidence-based strategies and cross-sector collaboration.



In August, 2016, Blair Planning was awarded \$10,000 seed funding from the AETNA Foundation as part of the Healthiest Cities and Counties Challenge

Challenge or "The Challenge". The seed funding was utilized for active transportation expansion in Blair County with the intent of improving health and the quality of life for Blair County residents through opportunities in the built environment to engage in physical activity.

As part of "The Challenge", in the summer of 2017 work began on developing five new routes in Blair County including routes in Bellwood, Martinsburg, Roaring Spring, Claysburg, and Tunnelhill Borough. Also as part of "The Challenge", BCPC partnered with HBCC and the South Hills School of Business in Altoona to develop an active living map/brochure to serve as a directory for anyone visiting or residing in Blair County to play, get active, and have fun! The active living map/brochure is available at local business and organizations across Blair County and also online at the HBCC webpage.



In the spring and summer of 2018 kick-off events were held in the five communities for the new routes.

The Challenge ran from October 1, 2016 to September 30, 2018. Although we did not win the Challenge we consider ourselves very fortunate to be a part of such a special select community of 50 members! Blair County would like to congratulate the Healthiest Cities & Counties Challenge winners Mecklenburg County, NC and Bridgeport, CT.



HEALTHIEST CITIES & COUNTIES CHALLENGE



Subdivision & Development Reviews

Section 502 of the *PA Municipalities Planning Code* gives the Planning Commission authority to review and comment on subdivision and land development proposals submitted to local municipalities in those municipalities that have a subdivision and land development ordinance. A fee sufficient to cover the costs for the review is also authorized. The Commission also comments on consistency with the Blair County Comprehensive Plan in accordance with Section 303 of the *PA Municipalities Planning Code; Acts 14, 67, 68, 127, 247, and Act 537, the PA Sewage Facilities Act. Federal Executive Order #12372* also provides the authority to comment on the consistency of federally-funded projects.

In 2018, the Planning Commission reviewed 139 subdivision and land development plans, which was greater than the years 2014-2015, but slightly lower than the 165 plans reviewed in 2016 and the 149 plans reviewed in 2017. Review fees collected for subdivision and land development reviews were also greater than the totals for years 2014-2015, but were lower than the fees collected in 2016 and 2017. Additionally, Intergovernmental review requests were lower in 2018 than totals from the previous four years. The table below provides information on the annual review totals by type.

Annual Review Totals by Type

Calendar Year	Subdivision/ Development Reviews	Review Fees Collected	Intergovernmental Requests	Actions By Governing Bodies
2014	111	\$29,975.00	113	6
2015	107	\$23,375.00	112	4
2016	165	\$36,900.00	120	9
2017	149	\$33,375.00	100	5
2018	139	\$31,800.00	91	10



Subdivision & Development Reviews

In 2018, municipalities with the highest levels of subdivision and land development activity were the City of Altoona, Logan Township, Blair Township and Frankstown Township. See table below for the annual Subdivision and Land Development Review Totals by Municipality from 2014—2018.

Annual Subdivision and Land Development Review Totals by Municipality					
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
City of Altoona	10	13	24	31	25
Bellwood Borough*	0	0	0	0	0
Duncansville Borough	0	0	0	1	0
Hollidaysburg Borough	7	3	4	3	6
Martinsburg Borough*	0	0	0	0	0
Newry Borough*	0	0	0	0	0
Roaring Spring Borough	1	0	1	1	1
Tunnelhill Borough*	0	0	0	0	0
Tyrone Borough	2	0	1	5	1
Williamsburg Borough*	0	0	0	0	0
Allegheny Township	13	14	16	15	5
Antis Township	7	18	6	12	6
Blair Township	5	10	4	4	16
Catharine Township	7	2	2	3	3
Frankstown Township	0	1	13	12	10
Freedom Township	4	7	9	5	5
Greenfield Township	9	4	15	10	3
Huston Township	3	1	9	7	6
Juniata Township*	0	0	1	0	0
Logan Township	20	13	16	18	23
North Woodbury Township	7	4	13	5	6
Snyder Township	6	5	6	4	5
Taylor Township	3	1	10	5	1
Tyrone Township	3	2	4	3	9
Woodbury Township	4	9	11	5	8
Total	111	107	165	149	139
* Municipalities without Subdivision and Land Development Ordinances - BCPC Review is not required by law.					



Contracted Services

The boards and staff are not the only gears in the Blair Planning machine. We have been fortunate over the years to engage with outside support for areas of expertise outside the bounds of our own. These services are essential to our functioning, but tend to be in the background and go unrecognized. This year, we are taking some print space to acknowledge our 'adjunct staff' of contracted services.

First, after nearly two decades of service, Attorney Michael Rutch asked to be relieved of his Solicitorship at the end of 2018. While legal services are not routinely engaged at Blair Planning, we were well-satisfied with the services provided by Attorney Rutch during his tenure as our solicitor and wish him the best in his future endeavors. Beginning in 2019, we have engaged Attorney David Pertile as our solicitor and are looking forward to a long and successful relationship with both him and his firm.

Our payroll and books have been under the diligent care of Guy Landolfi, CPA for the last few years. In addition to the basic payroll service, his firm has provided additional advice and assistance when needed to keep the wheels turning, and is very much appreciated.

The other background service is for our information technology needs. These are provided by PC Works Plus. They have been keeping us networked both internally and externally for nearly a decade and have ensured that we are up-date and running as efficiently as possible. Computers have become an indispensable part of office life, and we thank them for their efforts over the years.



Blair County Planning Commission 2018 Annual Report



Blair County Planning Commission
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