

UPFB Weekly Meeting 3.1

Fri, Mar 01, 2024 9:00 AM • 1:13:02

**SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

students, campus, project, planting, year, consultants, representative, plan, trees, pilot projects, university, maintenance, emissions, landscape, fleet, areas, number, meeting, wanted

01:56

**Chair Rodriguez:**

I call this Friday March 1 meeting to order at 9 am. Vice Chair Chandler, would you please take opening roll call?

02:06

**Vice Chair Chandler:**

Yes, I will. \*Roll call and quorum is met\*

02:38

**Chair Rodriguez:**

Is there anyone's name who has not been called? Okay, seeing that everyone's name has been called. We'll now move into the adoption of the meeting minutes from our past Friday meeting, February 23. Is there a motion to adopt the meeting minutes? Is there a second? We'll now move into line item three, the adoption of the agenda. Is there a motion to adopt the agenda? And we'll now move into line item four, public comment. Are there any students here for public comment? Seeing no students here for public comment we’ll now move into line item five of old business and seeing that there's no old business we'll move into line item six of new business, which is the Sustainable Landscape Implementation Plan Update presentation. Please Let the record reflect that Representative Johnson has arrived. Welcome all, we're so happy to have you all here to present on this project and for the Board to hear an update and the next steps that would be needed to move forward. You all will have the time that you need to present the update. I'll pull this up here. We'll have people that will trickle in as you go, you can just ignore that. And then we also have four representatives on Zoom. So you'll be presenting to them as well. And if they can't hear, they’ll let us know. Are you all ready to go on pull this up? Okay, awesome. And if you just want to either run it here and then I'm going to do it for you. I can do it either way.

04:24

**Grace Wills (EcoAction Sustainable Landscapes Representative):**

Whatever you think would be easier.

04:30

**Chair Rodriguez:**

Okay, and then you can just move it.

04:42

**Grace Wills:**

Okay. Perfect, great. So, hi, my name is Grace Wills and we are part of EcoAction. So today we're just going to be talking about an update on our Sustainable Landscapes Implementation Plan, which we received funding through the Student Fee Board when we submitted a proposal for the sustainability fund. So this is just an update on what we've done with the funding so far. So we began our work with hiring design consultants. So that’s Stimson, Phyto Studio, Climate Positive Design, and PHS. So these are just some images of things that we did with these design consultants. So basically, we started with a steering committee, so it involved members from these design teams, members of EcoAction, members from OPP. And then also like Shavers Creek, professors.

06:10

Um, but yeah, so there is our steering committee on Zoom. So we had a couple initial meetings to discuss how we wanted to go about this project and what we were doing. And then the steering committee visited Penn State campus and walked around and basically analyzed the campus, took down some notes, to just see what was going on here. And then we also had a couple of meetings to involve the Penn State community and the public to talk about what this project was and what they wanted to see. And it's received some feedback. So after these initial visits to Penn State, the design team analyzed their observations, and they kind of represented what the campus is like. So they took some data and looking at the areas that are like canopy or ground cover, or just plain lawn space. And then they also observed areas of concern. So places where student traffic, they erode planting beds, when students start to walk off the sidewalks, or if there's mulch beds that could use some more shrubs and plant life, and also lawns that just aren't being utilized as much.

Then, after this analyzation, they began some recommendations. So one of the recommendations was to add more ecological layers to the landscape that's present here at University Park. So right now, there's normally just one layer, whether it be canopy or ground cover, so they're kind of suggesting that we implement some more layers to our campus. They also looked at the maintenance that's going on relating to landscaping, so that includes what tools are we using to maintain our landscape? And how frequently do we maintain our landscape? So that's looking at the mowing operations. Like, can we change what tools we're using? What emissions are they creating? And then like I said mowing operations, So can we cut down on how many times we mow in one week? Could it be turned into more of a native grass meadow, just things like that. So these slides have a lot of information on them. But our design team was very thorough with their analyzation. So there's a lot of numbers, but honestly, I'm trying to summarize this up here.

08:37

This is a big graph that they created. But basically it shows that they took into consideration all these things that they could do. And we wanted to discuss what specifically can we do to decrease our greenhouse gas emissions. So this graph is just basically showing that that we can do certain actions we can achieve these goals. And then continuing the recommendations, they talked about ways that we can do this, which would be implementing more tree cover, supplementing ground cover where there's like full lawn spaces that are unused, and then also bringing hort woods which if you didn't know, the campus used to be all hort woods, and now we just have a small area in the north side of campus. So we kind of want to bring that back.

09:43

**Carlin Blash (EcoAction Sustainable Landscapes Representative):**

We have two pilot projects that are our focus for Student Fee Board funding. So the first one is Westgate. There's basically a large area right now unutilized lawn space that we could convert into like a sun meadow, but also closer to the building those like layered plantings like they've talked about earlier. The area, more like the amount of sun it gets the fact that it's unutilized lawn, and it's really just a way to elevate, it's visible to students and so that we can make it more ecologically active environment.

The second one is near Pasquerilla Student Spiritual Center. And this is also another sun meadow, like, closer to the building, like near like, under all the trees there also increase the activity going on there, there's also underutilized lawn space. The area further out near the road would be like more denser, planting that suitable with like with salt, like snow removal methods. It would withstand that. And we've had two like preliminary plantings and I thought the pilots have been going well for just the first one year. We did preliminary planting at Mueller Laboratory in 2022. And then another one in 2023 by the Stuckman Family building. And these are really just ways to get students involved. And like, get word out about the project. And so that once we like get to know the actual pilot project, we can really expand all the students we're reaching, and really reach like the whole campus. But like, this is what we want to do. We're not trying to convert, you know, Old Main lawn or Hub Lawn into, you know, a meadow or like put trees are necessarily but underutilized areas where it would benefit the environment to return it to more of a forested area like it wants to be.

11:55

**Chair Rodriguez:**

And we'll now open up the floor for questions. Are there any questions on this presentation? Vice Chair Chandler.

**Vice Chair Chandler:**

Vice Chair Chandler, GPSA Appointee. Thank you for your presentation. Could you go more thoroughly over the scopes? I would appreciate understanding these numbers.

**Grace Wills (EcoAction Sustainable Landscapes Representative):**

Yeah, Like these kind of like big, confusing slides? Yeah. So basically, the design team created a big final report. And so like the purpose of this presentation was to kind of just discuss what they've collected and what they've been working on. Because we plan to apply for more funding to actually implement the two pilot projects that Carlin discussed. So they have a final report that we are going to like, put out. So I know these slides are kind of confusing without more context. But basically, I guess, on this slide, this is a big like, overall plan. And obviously, we're starting small with pilot projects and such. So I guess like the scopes just show different, like, categories of what can be done. So like this first scope is kind of like looking at the maintenance efforts of landscaping, specifically, like what they're utilizing. The second one is not necessarily like active, but more like the energy that's being used. And then the third scope is just relating to like, overall, what's going on campus. We have that big report that is being finalized. That might provide more context and more description, if that's helpful. But do you have any more questions?

**Vice Chair Chandler:**

No, thank you. Thank you for your explanation. I'm curious to see how the university supports this effort. It seems you mentioned that this will support the university’s sustainability goals. Can you comment more on that?

**Grace Wills** **(EcoAction Sustainable Landscapes Representative):**

Yeah, so we I guess we have shown, like, presented these slides in this presentation to the Penn State community in the fall of 2023. And Penn State has like specific goals that President Bendapudi, I think, supported that were published relating to like net zero emission, like carbon emissions and such. So I think it just goes along with that. These are like the big overall like looking at maintenance and stuff. But we would just like, you can't do it all at once. So we would start small, like the pilot projects. And then when we can discuss like maintenance and like tools that we use stuff like that, it will start to benefit that goal.

**Carlin Blash (EcoAction Sustainable Landscapes Representative):**

Yeah, it's, it's mainly like helping with 100% net greenhouse gas emission reduction by 2035. Basically, like, pushing back the number of days until we mow again, by working schedule until like six or seven, even that just a little bit and like cut down the days to mow in a year that we're going and reduce those emissions that was really one like what we're actually physically emitting on campus. And then thw combination of that like reducing our emissions, but also having these landscapes that are kind of left to do their own thing, that all combined, this will help us reach that whole university wide goal by 2035. Otherwise, it's kind of like we can't really get into that.

16:29

**Chair Rodriguez:**

Representative Delena.

16:30

**Representative D’Elena:**

Hayden D’Elena, UPUA appointee. Thank you for your presentation, I really appreciate it. It kind of breaks down like you have your total goal of like 100% net greenhouse gas emissions, and then you break it down by year. This goes to say 2025 is only a year away, which is odd to say out loud, but it's marketing, you know, minus 55% net, do you know if we're on target for that, or any projection on that?

17:02

**Grace Wills (EcoAction Sustainable Landscapes Representative):**

We don’t have any specifics on that, but like I said, that's like something as easy as like, reducing the mowing is something that we start like now, because obviously, the whole plantings are gonna take more planning and longer time. But so there's definitely things that we can start to do now.

17:22

**Derek Kalp, EcoAction Advisor at OPP:**

I don’t know if we’re specifically tracking that number, but I know this coming summer, we're targeting anywhere from probably around 50 to even as much as 80 acres overall at University Park that we're going to stop mowing, or potentially stop mowing just as an initial reduction. But then the goal of this project is to actually convert those lawns into other types of morphologically beneficial landscapes.

**Chair Rodriguez:**

Representative Nevil.

**Representative Nevil:**

Tim Nevil, At-Large Representative. Going back to the two pilot programs, do you have an estimated cost of what those will look like? I know in the document, it kind of says it was X amount. Do we know what that would potentially look at?

18:09

**Grace Wills (EcoAction Sustainable Landscapes Representative):**

I don't have my numbers on me, but and apologies for not introducing Derek earlier. But he's our EcoAction advisor, he also works for OPP. So he's a big part of this project.

18:22

**Derek Kalp (EcoAction Advisor):**

So our pulmonary estimates for both projects combined would be at about 340,000 to 350,000. And then, similar to the proposal for monies for this study, we have about 30,000. Let's see about 30,000 left over, we're going to add 20,000 to that, so we'd have 50,000 right now, and probably another 50 probably a little over 100 that we could contribute from OPP toward implementing the project. And we actually, part of the estimate was to include two years of maintenance, basically, the establishment plants. That's a real critical time.

**Representative Nevil:**

Is that for both projects?

**Derek Kalp (EcoAction Advisor):**

Yes, for both projects, for installation, and then two years of maintenance.

19:19

Chair Rodriguez:

Representative D'Elena, Sykes, and then Concepcion.

19:24

**Representative D’Elena:**

Hayden D’Elena, UPUA Appointee. This wasn't kind of listed before, but this is a previous project that happened a while ago that kind of had a unique ecological impact. And it was that making Penn State less road and parking lot heavy. For example, I read that Shortlidge used to just have like a big threw, and then they added that walking area, which then added a lot more grounds for trees and shrubs and all that stuff, removing parking lots, which allows more planting. Is that a consideration that you might do in the inevitable future? And I know it's not part of your pilot program, but is that kind of a project that you've thought about?

19:59

**Grace Wills (EcoAction Sustainable Landscapes Representative):**

I don't think it's something that we discussed majorly, it might have been thought about. But that is definitely something that we can consider and what are things that we could take away? I think our current, like main goal is to, like, add to landscapes that are minimal right now. But that is also something to consider: are there things that we can take away to maybe put forested area there?

20:32

**Representative Sykes:**

Zion Sykes, UPUA Appointee. Hi, thanks for presentation. So I know you mentioned it a little bit earlier, just like thinking about like some of the ways students get involved. But I just kind of curious like, if how, like you're doing going about getting students involved? Do you like reaching out to like, specific class or maybe ask students or is it just within your organization?

20:51

**Grace Wills (EcoAction Sustainable Landscapes Representative):**

So when I mentioned before that we had our meetings kind of to evolve because the community we hadn't invited other clubs, and then also something that we're doing to supplement our upcoming proposal for more funding is we started a petition to get Penn State students to support sustainable landscaping at Penn State. So we reached out to clubs like the Landscape Architecture Student Society. Also the Student Sustainability Advisory Council, just like groups like that. So we're connected with other organizations and we want other organizations to evolve. We don't just want it to be like EcoAction is doing the plantings. The one preliminary project we had involved the Landscape Architecture Students Society.

21:45

**Carlin Blash (EcoAction Sustainable Landscapes Representative):**

Yeah, I think our ultimate goal is to get like as much of the campus involved as possible. I mean, obviously, we're one club. So kind of difficult, but I think if we can like, especially reach out to certain classes, where students would be interested, and getting like professors or even like, academic advisors at colleges to spread the news. We really don't want it to be like, you have to be in an environmental field, or like landscape architecture or something like that to be involved. We really want it to be open to everyone on campus, because it's something that affects everyone. And something that really doesn't require certainly major to be interested.

22:24

**Representative Sykes:**

Yeah, okay. I was just kind of curious for like, ways that maybe in the future that could be like, expanded, like the outreach work, because I think it'd be cool. Like, I've never heard of it. There was like, open to interactive, I think it'd be cool. And I'm like a global/international studies major.

22:38

**Grace Wills** **(EcoAction Sustainable Landscapes Representative):**

Yeah. So I think once we get like the actual pilot projects, it'll be easier to be like, “here's this big land thing,” because obviously, we have a much larger space to cover. We're gonna need a lot more people, I think it'll be a lot easier to really get the word out about.

22:52

**Representative Sykes:**

Thank you.

**Derek Kalp (EcoAction Advisor)**:

I could add, so one of our kind of exciting models here. The Arboretum what they installed the pollinator and bird garden, they had over 140,000 plants installed on that project. And they had hundreds of volunteers come out, they had scheduled days, the volunteers came out and they had the lay out all done and then the volunteers can just plant it. And then we actually have another preliminary project on Sunday, April 21. And we actually have a Homecoming committee coming in to do some of that hort woods you know, restoration work and so they've got sometimes as many as 200 students from I think primarily like Greek Life. And they're very excited about like legacy of hort woods and bringing that back so I think as we get the word out it's going to take off.

23:49

**Chair Rodriguez:**

Representative Concepcion.

23:54

**Representative Concepcion:**

Giselle Concepcion, UPUA Appointee. I know that you have like selected two pilot projects. I'm sure that in like study you found other areas that could necessitate support. Can you walk me through how you prioritize picking these specific projects? And is there any sort of like timeline on when you want to like eventually kind of like do you have like sort of a list of like what you could kind of cycle through as you'd receive support throughout the years?

**Carlin Blash (EcoAction Sustainable Landscapes Representative):**

I know other places we looked at were like around Eastview Terrace, South Halls. I think along University Drive one of them as well. By the Oblisk. Right, yeah, but yeah, we really want like high visibility areas that like students are gonna see, like as they like walk around campus or even just visitors. And we can have signage that says like, this is the purpose of this project. So that really like people are interacting with it. And it's kind of an educational tool along with, like, helping the university.

24:59

**Grace Wills (EcoAction Sustainable Landscapes Representative):**

Basically, we just, the design team helps look at like, we had a bunch of lists of pilot projects after their full analyzation. And then these two were the best to start with.

25:14

**Derek Kalp EcoAction Advisor:**

So yeah, lots of options, we, the consultants actually identified to make our landscape operation, net carbon zero, about 80 acres, convert about 80 acres of turf into these other landscape typologies, on a core part of campus. And they wanted to find some that, you know, has a high likelihood of being successful. So that was part, and like Carlin and Grace said, that would be really, you know, something that students and others could see. And one that I'm also really excited about, and maybe it's a proposal at some point is Fisher Plaza, which is basically just a grassy area. Next to Kern, Chambers, and kind of up the hill from Pattee Library. We've got some really beautiful drawings for that, how that could be a student-oriented space, but also weave in this forest environment into that, and that setting. So there's a lot of options, like I said, ultimately, 80 acres just on this part of campus. Our consultants have told us that, you know, there are some small liberal arts schools that have done some pretty major, you know, transformations of campus. But they know of no large institution like this that's looking at this comprehensively and wanting to do a transformation like this. So it's pretty cool. We're going to be presenting at some conferences and stuff about too, so it seems like we're getting some excitement outside of the university too.

26:49

**Chair Rodriguez:**

I was just hoping to ask if you all could provide some linear connection from the initial proposal that was submitted for like the new members that are on the board, but also those who might not have the background context of what the student driven aspect of this was around two years ago, I believe. Yeah. I hope that would be helpful for all of you.

27:17

**Grace Wills (EcoAction Sustainable Landscapes Representative):**

Yeah, yeah. So basically, our context is, like, we wanted sustainable landscaping on campus. So our proposal included background on what the current landscape is, and how EcoAction wanted to the see the change. And then our plan was to find people that knew what they were doing because this is obviously a big project, so just the funding was going towards designing and analyzing the campus, which is like what we kind of showed today, like, what the results were of that. And that's our phase one that was just beginning of, like, how could this project be achieved? What could our goals be? Like, what can we actually do? And then phase two is kind of these two pilot projects that we showed today. And then we kind of want to keep advancing from there. But so that first proposal was just kind of like, what is here? What can we actually do? And now that we have that information, and we've created the design, and we want to involve students, we want to make some interactive spaces. Now we want to actually

**Carlin Blash (EcoAction Sustainable Landscapes Representative):**

Yea, like what Grace was saying, I think our goal really towards students with this whole project is making more like nature green spaces on campus for students to interact with, like Grace said, or like, not only like physical wellbeing, but also mental wellbeing, you know, just like caught up in school, we kind of sometimes just need a place to go to and like relax. So one of Derek's ideas with the Fisher Plaza idea, specifically, it's like some meditation spots, that kind of thing, which really encourage students to get out there and just like, I don’t want to say detach, but you know what I mean. But also, like, we've been talking about getting students involved with the planting, some volunteer opportunities, that thing and another benefit of having these actual, like, ecologically diverse areas on campus is like research opportunities for students. I'm sure like the landscape architecture, students, biology, all that kind of stuff can use it as like kind of a living lab is our idea.

**Chair Rodriguez:**
Vice Chair Chandler.

29:37

**Vice Chair Chandler:**

Vice Chair Chandler, GPSA Appointee. I remember initially, this presentation was shared with another group on sustainability. I forget what the group was called. And I was really excited to see there was a comment on the maintenance and how it really but the nature of the university's budgets and employment but it actually easier to maintain lists, but just looking at the workforce practicality, the practical nature of our workforce that we wouldn't be maintaining these lawns. Can you provide further comment with the added context of the workforce that would be maintaining this.

30:27

**Derek Kalp (EcoAction Advisor):**

So it's really interesting. We're kind of ended up being ahead of the curve, because two years ago, we got this thing going. And then since then we've had our, you know, budget crisis, right. So our, so we're approaching this way. So one is like, we, our administrators who I thought were going to be really conservative about this, are saying, okay, awesome, can you do this, because if it can save money, then fantastic. And so just by not mowing, like I said, we’re going to do probably at least 50 acres of not mowing is already going to produce, because we're going down people and we have a crew of about 80-85. And we lost about 14 or 15. And they're letting us hire back about six. So we're going to be losing about eight people. So that's a big part of it is like, what can we initially do to save money. And then the trick is the establishment period, I mentioned what it was two years of getting plants to grow. Any baby living organism needs nurturing initially, right. But we're going to build that into the project cost so that those two years are funded through the initial project costs, instead of OPP having to take the burden off of that maintenance. But what I've sent to our folks who like question this over the years, is like, well, like if you go to the next slide. So right below where it says Pasquerilla Spiritual Center, there's a little grayed in areas of lots of circles. So that's a little woodland patch that’s a remnant of hort woods. So I say to our folks, okay, our maintenance folks, what do you guys do in that little woodland patch? Nothing, they don't do anything to it. So we can convert more of our lawn areas into these little pocket forests. Ultimately, the maintenance is near zero, there's some invasive species that we might need to, you know, control, but other than that you're really not doing anything. So that's a big part of it is we can kind of get over this hump in terms of getting these plants established. It should reduce our overall costs and maintenance burden. And then another point out is Hershey Medical Campus has had meadow throughout their campus for a number of years now, several, at least several years, which has been successful. And that's the most complex kind of ecological landscape to try to create, because there's a lot of diversity. And there's a lot of pressure with weeds and things. And what they've done is they've kept the same number of staff. But as they've increased their meadow, the skill set of that staff has changed, or maybe someone's retired and they hire someone else in and so they've kind of made that shift over the years, and then kind of a gradual way, too. So that's kind of the approach. It's a big challenge for sure that it could be the biggest challenge. But if we've got strategies for it.

33:20

**Chair Rodriguez:**

And Representatives D’Elena.

33:23

**Representative D’Elena:**

Hayden D’Elena, UPUA Appointee. It felt like it was like, what, two years ago now, a lot of trees around the HUB were getting kind of cut down due to the fact that they were just kind of getting older, you know, diseases and stuff like that. It's kind of multi-part question, I apologize. You know, that's probably gonna end up happening again in the near future, especially by 2035. You know, are there efforts to replant some of the trees that have already been cut down and the trees that will be cut down? Will those be replanted as well with new trees?

33:50

**Grace Wills (EcoAction Sustainable Landscapes Representative):**

I think that might be more of like, something that's, like specific to OPP and ours is kind of like a project because the pilot projects. Derek might want to speak more on that. But I know definitely, like, if there's trees that can cause a hazard to students, they have to be cut down and things like that. But definitely, like if there's areas that we see that there needs to be more planting or like replanting trees. That can happen, but I think it's like, that might be more of like just an OPP, like maintenance thing.

34:26

**Derek Kalp (EcoAction Advisor):**

Yeah, that's kind of my job. But this pilot project, for example, because of the it's a basically expanding this woodland. It's got 72 trees as part of that project. So our own crews plant about 100 trees a year. And we focus on core campus, you know, we lose a tree along the street or we've been losing our elms gradually over the years we've, we've replaced those trees. And we even have our own OPP nursery.

35:02

**Grace Wills (EcoAction Sustainable Landscapes Representative):**

Yeah, so um, something that EcoAction does is we have an Earth Day event on HUB lawn where we invite the organizations kind that we mentioned earlier and just local organizations as well related to environmental and sustainability focuses. And we do like tabling efforts. So like every organization has a table. They come and it's just something to celebrate Earth Day and bring these groups together so that students pass and live and learn more about the organizations and get involved with if they like. And we have games and crafts as well. And then thing we're doing is this old willow planting so we normally have like a ceremonial tree planting every year. Old Willow is like a very core tree to Penn State and it still keeps living on even as it has died. I think we'll have we sold like a sample of it or a stick of it, that we keep replanting every time it dies. But yeah, so we are having a planting on Friday, April 19. I think at 4pm. We're gonna have a ceremonial like Old Willow planting.

36:12

**Derek Kalp (EcoAction Advisor):**

So Old Willow. Our first president Evan Pugh was traveling to Europe. And he went to this famous English poet's cottage, snapped a branch off of this weeping willow next to his cottage, brought it on a boat, I guess, over and stuck it in the ground on Pattee Mall in front of Sackett building at the time, and it grew, so was the first tree planted. And we like to think of it as the beginning of Penn State's landscape legacy. And so the first tree 1.0 grew, and then it had to be removed in the 1920s, and then the second one, they can take root cuttings really easily, you could take like literally. If you broke a branch off and stuck it on the ground. So they took cuttings and they planted 2.0 which lasted to the 70s. And then this, that one came down in the 1970s and then 3.0 was planted. And then it just blew over in during COVID in a windstorm. And so we took cuttings, a bunch of cuttings, and they've been growing our nursery, and they're ready to be planted this spring. And so we're going to bring Old Willow 4.0 back to Old Main lawn. And then what we're going to do is ask commonwealth campuses if they would like one of these trees so that we can spread Old Willow across all of our campuses and have like a ceremonial planting, as well as rollout their sustainable landscapes plan. But formally, so apparently the President's invited and others. It’s like we're gonna have our own little party, we're going to make it hopefully a university-wide kind of deal. So we're pretty excited about that.

37:58

**Chair Rodriguez:**

And seeing no further questions, thank you all so much for coming in today to present on this. I’m sure the Board will have questions moving forward in the future and I'm sure you all will keep us updated on this project. But I wanted to be someone to tell you, thank you for the effort and work that you've put into this. It clearly is reflected here and the cost sharing aspect of this is really important and critical. So that just showcases the external evidence that you've already attended to allow this to become reality. So thank you and for all your volunteerism. Appreciate it. And then I'll motion to move the meeting into 10-minute recess right and the meeting will be moved into a 10 minute recess and we will reconvene at 9:47 am.

\*Recess\*

56:40

**Chair Rodriguez:**

All right. I will now reconvene the Friday, March 1 meeting at 9:55am. Cecily, I see you have joined us.

56:47

**Cecily Zhu (Sustainability Transportation Program Manager):**

Hello, sorry, just dealing with some trying to figure out my audio settings right now.

**Chair Rodriguez:**

You are totally good. I really appreciate you for taking a moment to join us today to provide just an update on what you all have been working on. I know that I've been in the loop beside of those meetings that you have invited me to. And I learned a lot from that. But I think it'd be helpful for the Board to hear this update on this project that was approved.

57:18

**Cecily Zhu (Sustainability Transportation Program Manager):**

Yeah, for sure. Thanks. So yeah, just there's just an update on the zero emissions fleet plan. So Transportation Services Office of Physical Plant, which I'll call OPP moving forward because what we call it. Penn State Sustainability and the Larsen Transportation Institute requested Student Fee Board funding to complete a University Park zero emission fleet implementation plan using consultant services with third party and including direct student involvement. So the funds the intention on the funds in terms of utilization are mostly towards hiring a consultant to create the plan. And also to fund two years of support for undergraduate students as paid interns and also for marketing the project.

The plan itself is going to provide the university with a roadmap to show how we can get to a zero emissions fleet through refueling infrastructure and vehicle replacement plans along with financing and incentive models to carry us through a realistic timeline. And you know, we don't have the same special specialties as these consultant groups do so really relying on their experiences across the country and even in other countries to help us get to zero emissions. So we were awarded the funding from the Student Fee Board in 2023. Through the environmental sustainability fund, we set up a core group with reps from transportation services, OPP, sustainability, Larsen Transportation Institute and the Student Fee Board. So and also just props to Najee for helping with that. I know the meetings aren't always super fun. But yeah, very information heavy. But it's always good to have you know that that transparency too, and having that student involvement. We hired our first student intern, Ibrahim, in November of 23. And he's been great. He's been mainly responsible for creating the requests for proposals or RFP to select the consultant, helping us score the RFP responses and addressing data requests to help set up a baseline for the plan and that's his main background is a lot of like data analysis. So it's really helping in terms of it know just using his expertise and you know, padding that resume. So the review committee just provided initial feedback on the first round of RFP responses from the consultants this week. So we already have interviews scheduled with the final four, we had 12 responses, which is a lot when you think about like 30 to 40 pages per response with a lot for the committee to review. So again, props to the committee for, for getting the scoring and feedback in on that. So we narrowed it down to the top four, in terms of their scope of work, as well as their, you know, ability to stay within budget. So we have the interviews scheduled in the next couple of weeks with the hope to proceed with the chosen consultant in April. So that's, you know, after going through contracts, and everything, so that we can really get down into the nitty gritty of creating the zero-emissions fleet plan. And in terms of schedule for having a final plan, we're looking at late August, early September. So that's where we're at right now. Happy to answer any questions. But again, really appreciate, again, the funding support as well as the as just the consistent student eyes on this project.

1:01:19

**Chair Rodriguez:**

I was hoping especially that for the newer members on the board, you could provide some insight into how this project started from the beginning and how you all got to ultimately you describe what you all are working on now. But what initially led to this feasibility study, and then the intent of the vehicles that you are all attempting to purchase. Just kind of those facts. Is that possible? Does that make sense?

1:01:49

**Cecily Zhu (Sustainability Transportation Program Manager):**

Yes. So it's funny because, so the person from my department who is responsible for getting this off the ground is actually no longer at the university. So I'm going to give as much as I am aware of, so we actually went to do a larger fleet plan, I think kind of started over COVID, just to look at right sizing the fleet, really get an inventory of the university's fleet in general. And wanted to make sure that we're being as efficient as possible with our resources. Found out that, you know, while transportation services with our main fleet operations, being focused on passenger and passenger type trips, and OPP with a lot of on-campus, utility trips, and things like that, we were, you know, the main, I guess, parties here in terms of size of fleet. And then we also recognize that there's smaller departments that end up buying, maybe they'll buy like one vehicle here or there, because they have a grant, but then they just let the vehicle sit for a year or two, without using it. And that's really just really inefficient way to manage a fleet. And so there wasn't a real centralized way to manage it. So that initial plan through Mercury Associates helped us gather all that information. Part of that plan included a kind of electrification plan component but it wasn't exactly what we're hoping for. It was it was basically yeah, install X number of charters and replace X percent of fleet by 2030, or something and it wasn't very helpful in terms of the realistic, I guess, environment that we're working with in terms of supply chain, what's available out there, future technologies, because it was only looking at EV and not things like hydrogen fuel cells, or biodiesel or you know, the other options available out there. So we wanted to make sure that we were really emphasizing our want to go towards zero emissions and also the university's overall commitment to sustainability and reducing emissions. And again, that Mercury report plan was mainly to help us right size the fleet so we kind of threw in these, the EV implementation piece as just a very like small side component. So we wanted to basically just zoom in on that and get something more actionable, something more realistic because we are committed to sustainability.

1:05:01

**Chair Rodriguez:**

Representative Nevil.

1:05:03

**Representative Nevil:**

Tim Nevil, At-large Representative. You kind of hinted at it. But, this may not be something you directly have an answer to now, but is the plan to explore a diverse fleet of both electrical, hydrogen fuel cell, and other options or is it? Are you looking towards one direction versus another?

1:05:20

**Cecily Zhu (Sustainability Transportation Program Manager):**

Yeah, our hope is to have something that's it's hard to say because there's... The way we look at it is there's like short term implementation options. So like what's available in the market right now, and looking at long term in terms of future technologies. So I think in the short term, we'll probably well, it depends on what the consultant provides us with. But we'll probably be looking at EVs or PEVS, just because of their availability in the market, and our ability to procure them within the state of Pennsylvania, but wanting to move towards hydrogen fuel cell, or if the consultants have some inside track knowledge on the availability of hydrogen fuel cell coming up in the next, you know, year or two or three, we can put that into the rotation of when we're replacing vehicles. So making sure that we have the infrastructure in place. For that, I think the biggest challenge with hydrogen fuel cell is fuel availability. And the networks just aren't super built out on the East Coast compared to the West Coast right now. So we also don't want to have a fleet that people can't use, if that makes sense. Like people, if they're taking trips across the state, and they don't have a hydrogen station to fuel that. They're not going to want to take that car. So we need to do it in a way that makes sense with what's realistic, and available right now. But yeah, we I mean, ideally, we want a mixed fleet by the end of it, but it's not like something we can just snap our fingers with. It's kind of a larger infrastructure issue.

**Representative Nevil:**

Thank you.

1:07:17

**Chair Rodriguez:**

Any other questions? Vice Chair Chandler.

1:07:23

**Vice Chair Chandler:**

Vice Chair Chandler, GPSA Appointee. Thank you for coming in and sharing an update on the zero-emissions feasibility study. I'm curious to know if there will be like... \*indistinguishable\*

1:07:39

**Cecily Zhu (Sustainability Transportation Program Manager):**

I'm sorry, I had trouble hearing what kind of requests?

1:07:43

**Vice Chair Chandler:**

Follow up requests? To either like the infrastructure request to the Fee Board? Will there be a follow up financial request to the board to this feasibility study?

1:07:58

**Cecily Zhu (Sustainability Transportation Program Manager):**

Gotcha in terms of like implementing what comes out of it? Gotcha. Um, I mean, our hope is that with what the consultants give us, in terms of a financing plan, and looking at grants in terms of state and federal level that a majority of that won't really have to come from internal to the university at all. I don't want to say majority actually, it depends on timeframe. It's not something that we're banking on asking the Student Fee Board for. But if the Student Fee Board would like to contribute to that, you know, we're always happy to accept that funding, but it's not. We're not relying on the Student Fee Board to make this happen. Does that make sense?

1:08:43

**Vice Chair Chandler:**

It does, thank you.

1:08:46

**Chair Rodriguez:**

Well, thank you so much, Cecily, we really appreciate the time you gave us today to provide that update. And I'm sure if any other questions come up, we'll be sure to reach out. But thank you so much for all the work that you're doing with this project. And it's been really fascinating to see the behind the scenes aspects of this. So thank you again.

1:09:06

**Cecily Zhu (Sustainability Transportation Program Manager):**

Yeah, of course then, again, if you have any questions, feel free to reach out to me. And I mean, Najee, you're also a direct line in so it's all good. Again, appreciate the interest and support.

1:09:20

**Chair Rodriguez:**

Thank you have a great spring break, Cecily.

**Cecily Zhu (Sustainability Transportation Program Manager):**

Thanks. I'm still working but you know, it's all good.

1:09:28

**Chair Rodriguez:**

You'll survive, you’ll survive. You’ve got this.

1:09:30

**Cecily Zhu (Sustainability Transportation Program Manager):**

It's okay. I can go to restaurants without like as much of a line. Yeah, silver lining.

1:09:37

**Chair Rodriguez:**

Yes, there is. Well, see you soon. Have a good one Cecily.

1:09:41

**Cecily Zhu (Sustainability Transportation Program Manager):**

Alright, take care.

1:09:47

**Chair Rodriguez:**

Back into our agenda, and that is going to be line item seven of the chair report that is listed. In my... I'm so sorry, I will now move into line item 6.C. I'm going to make a motion to postpone consideration. We just don't have the numbers for fiscal year 25 altogether. So we will postpone consideration of 6.C and move into 7, my chair report is listed in the folder. Line item eight the Vice Chair report. Vice Chair Chandler?

1:10:32

**Vice Chair Chandler:**

I have no update other than to follow us on all our social medias.

**Chair Rodriguez:**

Allright, line-item eight. Sorry question?

1:10:46

**Representative Sykes:**

Is there anything else besides the Instagram? Do we have anything else?

1:10:51

**Vice Chair Chandler:**

Yes we have a LinkedIn as well. Also have a Twitter/X and a LinkTree that is updated in our Instagram bio.

1:11:05

**Chair Rodriguez:**

right and will now move into line item nine executive committee reports are there any reports? Seing none, I'm going to move to line item 10, comments for the good of the order. Are there any comments for the good of the order?

1:11:21

**Representative Sykes:**

I hope you have a lovely spring break guys.

1:11:40

**Chair Rodriguez:**

Oh, we will now move into closing roll call, Vice Chair Chandler. Will you please proceed?

\*Vice Chair Chandler conducts closing roll call. Quorum is kept\*

1:12:29

**Chair Rodriguez:**

That being said, I will now adjourn this Friday, March 1 meeting at 10:11 am. Have a great spring break.