



Moving Ahead for Progress

Congress approved, and the President signed, a new federal transportation bill in July called Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21). The bill, which took effect on October 1st, authorizes federal policy and provides funding for the next two federal fiscal years.

The bill is more streamlined than its predecessors, combining several programs into the following five core categories: National Highway Performance Program, Surface Transportation Program, Highway Safety Improvement Program, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program, and Metropolitan Planning. Under these programs, the bill seeks to emphasize improvements in the following areas: safety, condition of transportation infrastructure, congestion reduction, transportation system reliability, and project delivery times.

The popular Transportation Enhancement and Safe Routes To Schools Programs are now classified as Transportation Alternatives under the Surface Transportation Program.

MAP-21 calls for a performance-based transportation system whereby goals will be established, and states will be required to set targets to achieve those goals. Within four years of the development of those targets, states will need to prepare biennial reports on their progress. This will be accomplished through the Metropolitan Planning Organizations' (MPOs) Long Range Transportation Plan and the 4-year Transportation Improvement Program. Performance measures will be established for pavement condition, bridge conditions, injuries and fatalities, traffic congestion, and freight movement on the interstate system.

The bill authorizes \$118 bil-

lion dollars of which \$80 billion will go toward highways & bridges, \$20 billion toward transit, and the remainder toward the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

Unlike previous bills which divvied up funds according to a formula, MAP-21 funds will be allotted to ensure that each state receives at least a 95% rate of return on the funds contributed by the state to the Highway Trust Fund. Pennsylvania will continue to receive about \$1.6 billion each year.

Also unlike previous bills, MAP-21 contains no federal earmarks - no funds set aside by Congress for projects within their districts.

For more information on MAP-21, go to <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/map21>

Focus 81 Targets 2 I-81 Ramps for Improvement

Focus 81, the organization founded in 2003 to find short-term and long-term initiatives to reduce congestion and improve safety on I-81, has identified two projects which they feel will help achieve those goals.

In recent years, Focus 81 was successful in securing federal funds to use to expand the width of I-81 through the Nanticoke-Waverly corridor. Unfortunately, the level of funding secured was not commensurate with the level of funding needed to

widen 81. So, the committee, in conjunction with PennDOT and federal legislators, has come up with two ramp pro-

jects instead. The first location is the Drinker Street northbound exit (Exit 186). Ramp improvements will be made and a traffic sign will be installed at this location to improve safety.

The other project is located on the southbound Blackman Street Exit (Exit 165). The off-ramp lane will be lengthened to prevent the back-up of vehicles on the interstate during peak periods of the day.

Both of these projects have been placed on the Transportation Improvement Program.



Focus 81 Committee at their June, 2012 meeting

2010 Census Produces New Urbanized Area Boundaries

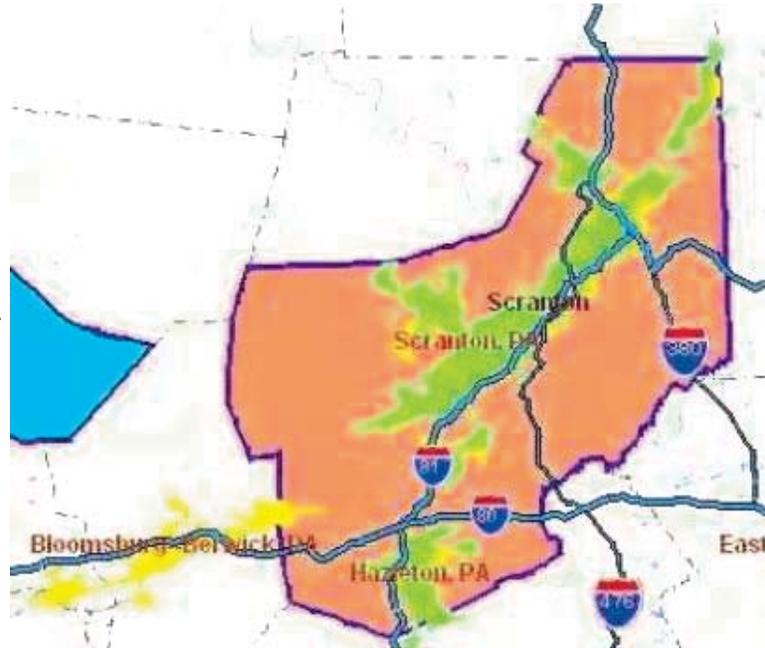
As a result of increased population figures derived from the 2010 Census, the Susquehanna Economic Development Association-Council of Governments (SEDA-COG) Rural Planning Organization (RPO) and the Lackawanna/Luzerne Transportation Study (LLTS) Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) will need to re-assess their boundaries in terms of transportation planning.

For transportation planning purposes, SEDA-COG is a Rural Planning Organization while Luzerne and Lackawanna Counties form a Metropolitan Planning Organization that is also a Transportation Management Association (TMA). (To be classified as a TMA, an MPO has to have an urbanized population of 200,000 or more). The designations of RPO and MPO are assigned based on the census population data for the Urbanized Area (UZA) within their boundaries. By definition, an urbanized area is a census-designated region with a population of 50,000 or more.

Although the SEDA-COG RPO area encompasses all of Columbia, Juniata, Mifflin, Montour, Snyder, Clinton, Union, and Northumberland Counties, it did not qualify as an MPO because its UZA population was less than 50,000. The UZA in 2000 expanded and bled into

southwestern Luzerne County, but because the UZA population did not reach 50,000, no action needed to be taken at that time.

However, the 2010 census data indicated that the UZA population in the Bloomsburg-Berwick area was 53,618, exceeding the



Green areas represent the 2000 Census UZA; Yellow areas represent the 2010 Census UZA

50,000 standard for becoming eligible to be an MPO, and requiring action to be taken to determine how the UZA area bleeding into Luzerne County will be handled.

When such a situation occurs, the two planning partners, in this case, SEDA-COG and

LLTS, have the following options from which to choose.

SEDA-COG remains an RPO and cedes the Bloomsburg-Berwick UZA to LLTS;

SEDA-COG opts to become a non-TMA MPO;

SEDA-COG and LLTS decide whether to revise the current MPO boundary to include the Bloomsburg-Berwick UZA within the newly formed SEDA-COG MPO and exclude it from the LLTS MPO jurisdiction;

SEDA-COG and LLTS opt to keep the current MPO/RPO boundaries and draw up a Memorandum of Understanding which states that each planning partner will be responsible for the portions of the Bloomsburg-Berwick UZA within their respective boundaries.

The SEDA-COG policy board discussed the situation and decided that it would like

to become an MPO. Becoming an MPO brings new responsibilities including the preparation of a 20-year Long Range Transportation Plan, developing a Congestion Management Program, and undergoing Air Quality Conformity Standards as part of the TIP and Long Range Transportation Plan preparation.

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Back Mountain Trail Kiosks Built By Boy Scouts

Thomas Lynch, a Boy Scout from Troop 281, decided to do something for his community as part of his Eagle Scout project. He planned to build three kiosks which would be placed at three separate trailhead locations along the Back Mountain Trail.

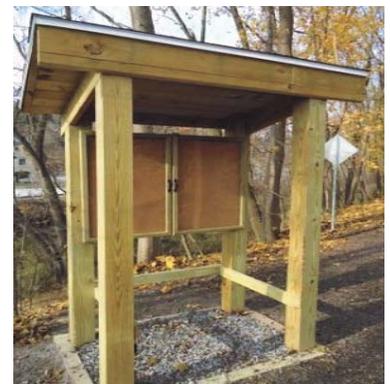
He completed the first one and placed it at the Harris Hill Road trailhead. However, before he could start on the other two kiosks, Thomas was killed in an automobile accident. Casey McAndrew, a close childhood friend of Thomas Lynch, decided

to finish the project his friend had started. A member of Troop 155, Casey and his fellow scouts, along with members of Thomas' Troop 281, worked together to construct the second kiosk. When completed, a dedication ceremony was held at the Carverton Road Trailhead in Trucksville on September 15, 2012.

Members of both Troops, the families of Thomas and Casey, and Back Mountain Trail representatives attended the dedication. The third kiosk will be installed in a

new section of the trail in Dallas Township next year.

Kiosk built by Thomas Lynch



Pierce Street Bridge Project Update

The Pierce Street Bridge connects Wilkes-Barre City and Kingston Borough in Luzerne County. The current structure was built in 1975 after the original bridge was destroyed by the Agnes Flood in 1972. The bridge is a 12-span prestressed concrete I-beam structure with a composite concrete deck. It is 1,136 feet 6 inches long and 79 feet 10 inches wide.

The work being done on the bridge is classified as rehabilitation which involves removing the entire concrete deck and replacing it with a new concrete deck. The project will also include new sidewalks, pedestrian railings and lighting on and below the bridge.

In order to maintain traffic flow on the bridge, the project is being done

in phases. Doing it in phases does lengthen the life of the project, but PennDOT determined that it was important to keep two lanes open during construction rather than closing down the bridge entirely. The first phase, already underway,



Work Continues on the Pierce St. Bridge Deck Replacement Project

involves replacing the deck on the downriver side of the structure. This phase is estimated to be completed by May of 2013.

Once completed with the downriver lanes, work will begin on the upriver lanes.

Prior to this project, the bridge was classified as being structurally-deficient due to the condition of the deck. Once the new deck is installed, that condition will be overturned. The bridge carries about 13,812 vehicles per day, 7 percent of which are trucks.

Rehabilitation of the bridge is estimated to cost around \$6.2 million and is 100% state-funded using Act 44 funds.

The physical work is anticipated to be completed by May 5, 2014.

2010 Census Produces New Urbanized Area Boundaries

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According to Jim Saylor, Transportation Planning Director for SEDA-COG, "PennDOT has been gradually ramping the RPOs up closer and closer to MPO requirements, so we've already put together and updated most of the required plans. Compared to new MPOs in other states, we have a big advantage because of the way PennDOT has recognized RPOs and helped bring our programs along."

LLTS discussed the situation and decided that it would like to keep its current MPO

boundary which encompasses all of Luzerne and Lackawanna Counties.

Therefore, SEDA-COG and LLTS will select the fourth option which will be to maintain the current boundaries, and LLTS will agree to continue providing transportation planning for those areas of the Bloomsburg-Berwick UZA located within Luzerne County.

When a similar situation occurred after the 2000 Census and portions of the LLTS UZA bled into some adjoining counties, the MOU

between the LLTS and the adjacent planning partners included a transfer of Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds based on the percentage of the UZA population that bled into those areas.

However, since the new SEDA-COG MPO will not be a TMA, and therefore not eligible to receive STP funds, the MOU will not include any transfer of funds.

The MOU between LLTS and SEDA-COG must be in place by March 29, 2013.

Heritage On Display at Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport

As of October 23rd, the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport (WBSIA) is home to a tourism/heritage display thanks to the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Roundtable. The Roundtable consists of local leaders who meet monthly to pool resources and facilitate cooperation among historic, cultural, educational and recreational organizations.

The large, whimsical display, (see photo at right) created by local artist Jeff DeAngelo, will greet passengers in the baggage claim area on the first floor of the airport. It is designed to welcome and encourage visitors to the area to "explore everything in the Lacka-

wanna Heritage Valley".

A large screen embedded in the display will run a continuous slide show of past and current scenes of the region, and two touch-screen kiosks will enable visitors to connect and access information about ten cultural, historic, tourism, and recreational sites in Lackawanna County, including the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail. QR codes will provide users the ability to use their smart phones to access the site information. Brochures that contain photos, contact information, and a map to the sites are also available.





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PennDOT District 4-0 Web Site:
www.neparoads.com



COLTS Celebrates 40 Years of Service

After the Scranton Transit Company ceased operation in 1971, Lackawanna County leaders began work on creating a transit authority to provide transit service for the region.

In compliance with the Municipal Authorities Act of 1945, the County of Lackawanna Transit System (COLTS) was approved for incorporation by the Pennsylvania Department of State on November 1, 1972.

A five-member authority oversaw the daily operations of the new transit system in conjunction with A.T.E. Management Service Company. COLTS had 25 buses in service on 20 routes on its first day of operation, and ultimately leased 31 buses. Estimates put the initial ridership at between 7,500 and 10,000 people who rode the bus free of charge. The base fare was 35 cents.

COLTS currently has 29 fixed routes and shuttle service on 4 routes, and the base fare is \$1.50.

Robert Fiume is the Executive Director of COLTS. At the 40th celebra-

tion, also attended by State Senators John Blake, Sid Michaels Kavulich, and Cathy Wechsler from Senator Ken Smith's office, and Lackawanna County Commissioners Jim Wansacz, Corey O'Brien, and Patrick O'Malley, Mr. Fiume outlined the progress COLTS has made over the last few years. During Fiume's tenure, COLTS has expanded its fleet to include 13 diesel-electric hybrid buses, has com-

pleted a comprehensive route analysis which resulted in revised routes and schedules, and as part of this process, the Authority recently came up with a new logo and new colors (lime green and navy blue).

COLTS is also in the midst of a technology upgrade with Avail Technologies to install an Automatic Vehicle Locator system which allows riders to track the location of buses on the internet and their mobile devices. Work is also continuing on the new Intermodal Transportation Center which will be located near the Trolley Museum in downtown Scranton, and on January 1, 2013, the Lackawanna County Shared Ride Program will merge with COLTS in an effort to streamline costs and provide more efficient service.

COLTS recently won its third national AdWheel Award from the American Public Transportation Association for its "Dump the Pump" radio messages.



From left to right: Cathy Wechsler, Corey O'Brien, Jim Wansacz, Robert Fiume, John Blake, Patrick O'Malley, and Sid Michaels Kavulich

Masthead Photo: COLTS Hybrid Bus with New Colors and Logo