



Bulk Rail Distribution Terminal to be Established

The Pennsylvania Northeast Regional Railroad Authority (PNRRA) and Linde Corporation are proud to announce the establishment of a Bulk Rail Distribution Terminal in Carbondale, Pennsylvania. The facility will be located in the former Carbondale Yards Industrial Park, which comprises much of the famous former Delaware & Hudson Carbondale Yards, which have operated since 1825 for rail yard operations, and constitutes one of the oldest such facilities continuously operated in the United States. The rail distribution facility will be served by PNRRA's contract rail operator, the Delaware-Lackawanna Railroad (DL). The DL has direct interchange connections with two Class I rail carriers-Norfolk Southern and Canadian Pacific Railway.

"This facility will be available to all of the many industries in Northeastern Pennsylvania who are not directly served by rail to reap the benefits of low-cost rail transportation savings in transporting their products in and out of our region," said Larry Malski, PNRRA President. "The facility will also provide a

major benefit to the burgeoning natural gas drilling industry in Northeastern Pennsylvania since many of the commodities, such as sand, pipe and water can be transported much more cheaply and efficiently by rail transportation", Malski said.

Chris Langel, Executive Vice-President of Linde Corporation, said that this partnership will allow Linde to provide one-stop shopping for the growing gas drilling and transmission industry when it comes to providing access to efficient, low-cost rail shipping for their gas utility clients. "We will be able to provide seamless, one-stop shopping for all of the gas drilling industry's bulk transportation needs into and out of Northeastern Pennsylvania with this partnership", said Linde.

Mr. Langel also stated that this partnership will benefit the Northeastern Pennsylvania region by providing

dozens of new primary and secondary jobs as a stimulus to our regional economy.

"The announcement of this new facility and jobs is very timely since it coincides with the major tie-replacement project that will start on the Carbondale mainline within the next 120 days. A Rail Freight Assistance Grant from PennDOT's Bureau of Rail Freight will allow the installation of approximately 7,000 new ties on the Carbondale mainline to allow the new rail traffic to efficiently traverse this mainline", Malski said. "Rail transportation is again becoming a growth industry in Northeastern Pennsylvania - the place where it all started in America."

Submitted by Larry Malski, PNRRA President



The Delaware and Lackawanna Railroad will serve the new bulk terminal.

STC Hearings To Be Held

The State Transportation Commission (STC) will begin gathering public testimony on the update to the Twelve-Year Program (TYP) in August.

Due to serious issues regarding transportation planning financing (solvency of the Highway

Trust Fund and expiration of Act 44 and SAFETEA-LU), discussion continues as to exactly when the update of the TYP will occur.

The hearings for the Lackawanna/Luzerne MPO region will be held on September 3rd

at the East Mountain Inn, Plains Township.

Additional information on the hearings, plus the guidelines for presenting testimony to the STC, can be found on the MPO Web Page (address on page 4).

SAFETEA-LU To Expire on September 30 - Varying Opinions on How To Proceed

The Safe, Accessible, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act - Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) will expire on September 30 this year. This means that either a new transportation authorization bill will need to be passed, or the current one will need to be extended

Congress and the Administration differ on the answer to that question. The Administration wants to extend the current legislation for eighteen months, and infuse \$20 billion into the Highway Trust Fund (HTF), which is expected to be cash-strapped as early as August.

In a memo sent to Congress, Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood stated that the HTF cash infusion could come from international tax enforcement, but stopped short of actually making that request. LaHood further stated, "Legislation to address the HTF shortfall should pass before the August recess to avoid disruptions to state cash management for further strain on state budgets. Although an extension of the HTF is urgent, the administration believes that this opportunity can be used to put in place a limited set of carefully thought-out reforms that can form the basis for further reforms in a full six-year authorization."

Secretary LaHood has called for the following minor reforms to be included in any legislation that would provide interim funding to the HTF:

Establish performance goals and base project selections on merit criteria that increase returns to transportation investment;

Spend \$300 million to improve state and MPO project evaluation capacity (a voluntary program);

Spend \$10 million for U.S. DOT to develop performance goals and establish guidelines for states and localities on project evaluation;

Increase transparency in state and local project reporting;

Support efforts to improve regional access and mobility, and enhance the livability of communities. Livability guidelines should include reductions in travel times, smart growth, preservation of open space, and more-integrated responses to land use and transportation needs.

Unlike the Administration, James Oberstar (D-MN), Chairman of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, is urging the Administration to pursue a full six-year authorization bill now. He and other members of the Committee have developed a Blueprint for Investment and Reform in which they outline why a new bill needs to be authorized, and how it can be shaped to better address the numerous problems facing the country's transportation system.

According to the report, decades of under-investment in the transportation system has cost the country in many ways. Accidents and crippling congestion in major cities cost Americans more than \$365 billion/year. Almost 61,000 miles (37%) of all lane miles on the National Highway System (NHS) are in poor or fair condition, and more than 152,000 bridges, one in four, are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.

Oberstar also cites the increase in total cost of logistics for private companies, the impact of transportation on the environment,

and the lack of transportation choices Americans have as additional reasons why a bill should be formulated now.

The two proposals agree on some provisions, such as performance metrics for transportation plans, and policies that will enhance the livability of communities.

The Blueprint states that since the completion of the National Highway System, the national transportation policy has lacked focus. Although states and MPOs across the country develop long-range transportation plans, they are not assembled into any cohesive national plan that is intermodal in nature and national in scope.

In regard to the financial aspect of the Blueprint, the committee is proposing an investment of \$500 billion - \$450 billion for highway, safety and transit projects, and \$50 billion to develop 11 authorized, high-speed rail corridors that would link major metropolitan areas of the country. This financial investment represents a 38% increase in transportation investment over the current legislation.

There is no clear indication at this point as to whether the Administration or Congress will prevail on how to proceed once SAFETEA-LU expires. Those involved in transportation planning realize the importance of having a secure funding source and comprehensive policy that will promote an efficient, safe, and inclusive transportation system for the country.

For more information on the Blueprint for Investment and Reform, go to:

<http://transportation.house.gov/>

Bicycle Commuter Act Passed

The Bicycle Commuter Act was passed by Congress as part of the Renewable Energy Tax Credit legislation in 2008.

The intent of the Act is to give those who commute by bicycle qualified transportation fringe benefits. Employees who use transit to get to work, or drivers who get compensated for parking receive such benefits now.

The type of costs covered by the Act in-

clude: purchase of a decent commuter bike, bike lock, helmet, shower facilities, and general maintenance.

Employers may provide reimbursement of \$20 a month for reasonable expenses incurred by bicycle commuters. However, unlike those who drive or use transit, the bike benefits cannot be funded through employee pre-tax income, nor can a biking commuter receive both transit and bicycle

transportation benefits in the same month. However, Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) introduced legislation earlier this year to make those two provisions possible.

Employers can either manage the benefits in-house or through a Commuter Benefit Provider.

For more information on the National Bike Bill, go to: www.bikeleague.org/news/100708faq.php.

On-Going Road/Bridge Project Updates

'Tis the season for road construction, and commuters and travelers who use I-81 to travel from Hazleton to Scranton have had to become adept at navigating through cross-overs and driving in single lanes enclosed by Jersey walls.

There are currently 9 interstate bridge contracts underway along I-81. Most are being funded through Act 44, and the others are being funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), also known as stimulus funds.

The southernmost road and bridge preservation project is located in the southbound lanes of I-81, on the 18.5-mile stretch between Nanticoke and Hazleton. Work on Phase I (Nanticoke - I-80 junction) is currently underway. The \$7 million project includes the following repair work: concrete pavement and joint repairs, concrete pavement patching, diamond-grinding of existing concrete pavement, and bituminous paving. The following 11 bridges are included in the project:

Little Wapwallopen Creek, (Mile Marker (MM)158);

Blytheburn Road (MM 158);

Big Wapwallopen Creek (MM 156.4);

SR 3010, Alberdeen Road (MM 156.4);

Over I-80 (MM 151);

St. Johns Road (MM 149.4);

Nescopeck Creek (MM 149);

County Road (MM 147.4);

Black Creek (MM 147.4);

Over Route 3007 (MM 154.5);

Over Tributary of Wapwallopen Creek (MM 156.1)

Phase II of this project (between the I-80 junction and Hazleton) will begin following the completion of Phase I.

Farther north on I-81, 2 bridge replacement projects are under construction. One is located over Lidy's Road, and the other bridge is located over PA 315 near the former Mayfair Supper Club (between Exits 170 - 178). Temporary bridges have been built to allow two lanes of traffic to flow through the construction site. The combined cost for the projects is \$9.3 million, \$4.3 million for the Lidy's Road Bridge, and \$5 million for the PA 315 bridge. Work is expected to be completed on these projects by April, 2010.

PA 924 Widening Project - Pipe installation and utility relocation are currently underway on this widening project in West Hazleton Borough. The road is being widened to 5 lanes throughout the majority of the project length, and widened to 7 lanes at the intersection of PA 924 and Barletta Drive. New traffic signals, drainage improvements, and paving are also components of the project.

Phase I, which runs from the I-81 junction to Barletta Drive, costs \$5.49 million. Phase II, which runs from Barletta Drive to just west of Scotch Pine Drive, will cost \$7.1 million. Phase III, which is slated to run from Scotch Pine Drive to the Schuylkill County line, is on hold due to lack of funding. Slusser Brothers Trucking and Excavating is the project contractor, and the work is expected to last through two construction seasons

PA 309 (North Crossvalley Expressway) - This \$3.15 million preservation project, currently underway between Exits 4 and 6, involves the encapsulation of 6 piers on the Kingston side of the Susquehanna River, concrete bridge repair, and joint replacement. The estimated completion date is October of this year. Susquehanna Supply Company is the contractor for the project.

8th Street Bridge - The construction of this 10-span structure is underway. The new \$23 million bridge replaces the old 2-lane camelback steel truss bridge which is nearing its 100th birthday. Located approximately 12 feet downriver from the existing bridge, the new bridge will consist of two 12-foot traveling lanes, two 10-foot shoulders, and a 6-foot wide sidewalk on the downstream side.

The new span will first be constructed from the River Road side of the river to mid-stream; construction from the 8th Street side will then be built to meet it.

Beam setting is expected to occur



Repair and replacement work continues on the North Crossvalley Expressway

at the end of July, which will be followed by deck placement. The causeway (gravel road built to allow construction) will be removed from the River Street side of the project, and reconstructed on the western side of the river this fall. The old bridge will be removed once the new bridge opens.

The project also involves improvements to the River Road/8th Street intersection, including turning lanes, which will help alleviate traffic back-ups that occur during peak periods.

Nyleve Bridge Corporation is the contractor for the project, and the anticipated completion date is early 2011.

I-81 Paving Project - PennDOT began a major I-81 resurfacing project on July 20th. The resurfacing of both the northbound and southbound lanes will extend from Nanticoke (Exit 164) to the airport (Exit 178A). Work on the \$7.8 million project will be done at night from 8 PM to 6 AM. Pennsy

Supply Company is the contractor, and Slusser Brothers of Hazleton, the sub-contractor, for the job which is expected to be completed by the end of October.

Wilkes-Barre Downtown Lighting Project: Phase III of the project is almost completed. It includes the installation of street lighting on North Washington, North Franklin, Union and E. Northampton Streets.

Information provided by Karen Dussinger, CRC/Press Officer, PennDOT District 4-0



Work continues on the new 8th Street Bridge

**LACKAWANNA/LUZERNE METROPOLITAN
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www.neparoads.com
PENNDOT District 4-0

New River Common Park Offers More Walking/Biking Options

On June 19, the culmination of a project that began in 1998 was presented to the public, and it was very warmly received. When the new River Common Park was unveiled, it revealed in no uncertain terms that a levee system need not consist of mere walls and earthen embankments.

Sponsored by the Luzerne County Flood Protection Authority and designed by Sasaki and Associates from Watertown MA, the new riverfront park offers access to the Susquehanna River at two locations along River Street in Wilkes-Barre - one across from the Wilkes University Campus, and the other across from the Kings College Campus.

The access is provided through two portholes that were cut out of the levee wall creating sandstone plazas with lighted, interactive fountains, bridges above the plaza openings, granite stairs leading up to the bridges, brick pavers, and a plethora of new plantings. Flood gates, which can be closed in times of high

water, are located within the base of the bridges.

Although 100 trees were removed during construction, more than 250 new trees, 500 shrubs, 12,000 perennials, and 30,000 pieces of groundcover were re-planted. The variety of plantings will provide an ever-changing palette of colors throughout the year.



Visitors enjoy the walkways of the new River Common Park on Opening Weekend

Walkers, runners, and bikers will now have the ability to travel from the Luzerne County Courthouse, located on the corner of N. River and North Streets, to the Dart Performing Arts Center on the campus of Wilkes University, located on the corner of S. River and South Streets, without having to cross any streets. (The distance between these two points is close to a mile.)

Those desiring a longer trip can access the River Common Park from the Kingston Reach of the Levee Trail, located on the west side of the river, by traversing either the Pierce Street or Market Street Bridges.

In addition to providing another area to walk and bike, the park will also be used as an amphitheater, a river landing, and a fishing pier. It will also provide visitors an opportunity to enjoy the riparian environment along the river, perhaps for the first time in their lives.