



Connections

Long-Awaited Coal Street Project Well Underway

Coal Street provides a vital link between Wilkes-Barre Boulevard and Business Route 6309. It also leads to Highland Park Boulevard—the main route to the Mohegan Sun Arena and all the commercial entities located nearby, including the Wyoming Valley Mall.

Originally a two-lane road, this gateway into Wilkes-Barre City is being widened to five lanes and realigned to intersect Wilkes-Barre Boulevard in line with Union Street.

The project began last year and has progressed to Stage 2 for construction. The detention basin is done, except for the southwest corner closest to the existing intersection of Coal Street and Wilkes-Barre Boulevard. The basin will be completed when the existing sanitary sewers are relocated.

The realignment portion of the project has been excavated to subgrade elevation, and the new

storm water systems have been completed under Wilkes-Barre Boulevard, and between Wilkes-Barre Boulevard and the county railroad line. Crews are currently installing the stormwater system from the Boulevard to Coal St. Park.

Construction of the roadway has been completed on the south side of Coal St (near Walgreens and Odyssey Fitness) from Empire Court to Route 6309. A temporary barrier has been installed and work is currently

underway on the north side from Rte. 6309 to the Coal St. Park. During this phase, major storm sewer work, demolition of targeted Interfaith Heights buildings, and retaining wall construction will occur.

Roadway construction will also occur behind the barrier which will remain in place throughout the construction season.

The \$11.7 million project is expected to be completed by the summer of 2012.



Completed section of south side of Coal Street

2011-2035 Long Range Transportation Plan Adopted By MPO

The Lackawanna/Luzerne MPO approved the 2011-2035 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) on June 17th at the Coordinating Committee meeting.

The LRTP serves as a guide for the MPO to use when selecting projects for the current or future Transportation Improvement Programs. It identifies the location, size, function, and type of existing transportation facilities and forecasts future needs. The plan includes projects for highways/bridges, streets, sidewalks, trails, transit, rail and airports.

In contrast to previous

LRTPs, the 2011-2035 version has been incorporated into the bi-county comprehensive plan to emphasize the close relationship between transportation needs and land use. The combined plan is known as the Lackawanna/Luzerne Regional Plan. It is the first such combined transportation/land use plan in the state.

The main focus of the LRTP continues to be maintaining existing transportation assets, with a special emphasis on bridge work.

Plans for future Bus Rapid Transit and Light Rail routes have been delineated in the plan. Although the necessary

funding for Light Rail is not available at this time, the MPO deemed it important to have plans ready in case funding becomes available in the future.

All MPO committees, a steering committee of over a hundred people, and the general public had several opportunities to provide ideas and share their opinions on all aspects of the plan.

An electronic version of the plan can be found on the MPO web page (see address on page 4) under “Plans and Documents”.

Plans for Reconstruction of I-81 Exit 178/Airport Access Road Project Proceeding

The MPO Technical and Coordinating Committees received an update on the combined reconstruction of I-81 Exit 178 and construction of the airport access road (located near the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport) project at their May/June meetings. Chris Tomaszewski, Project Manager, presented an overview of the project which is in the final design phase.

The Exit 178 project will include reconstruction of the northbound and southbound ramps, and the rehabilitation of the bridges over SR 315 and Plane Street. The bridge work will consist of new decks, as well as substructure repairs and widening. Two roundabouts will be constructed where ramps intersect with SR 315, and one roundabout will be constructed at the intersection of the airport entrance and Navy Way.

The benefits of reconstructing Exit 178

will be the elimination of the existing inadequate geometric conditions, improved safety within the interchange, an increase in the distance between the northbound ramps and the airport entrance, and improved access between the airport, I-81, the truck stop, and the industrial parks in the area.

The airport access road portion of the project includes the construction of a .85-mile extension of Navy Way. It will start at the airport entrance on SR 315, continue along the existing section of Navy Way, proceed around the future runway extension, span Lidy Creek and the turnpike, and connect to Commerce Boulevard in the Grimes Industrial Park.

The direct link to the Foreign Trade Zone and the industrial parks from SR 315 and I-81 will eliminate, or significantly reduce, truck traffic through residential neighborhoods which will improve safety in those

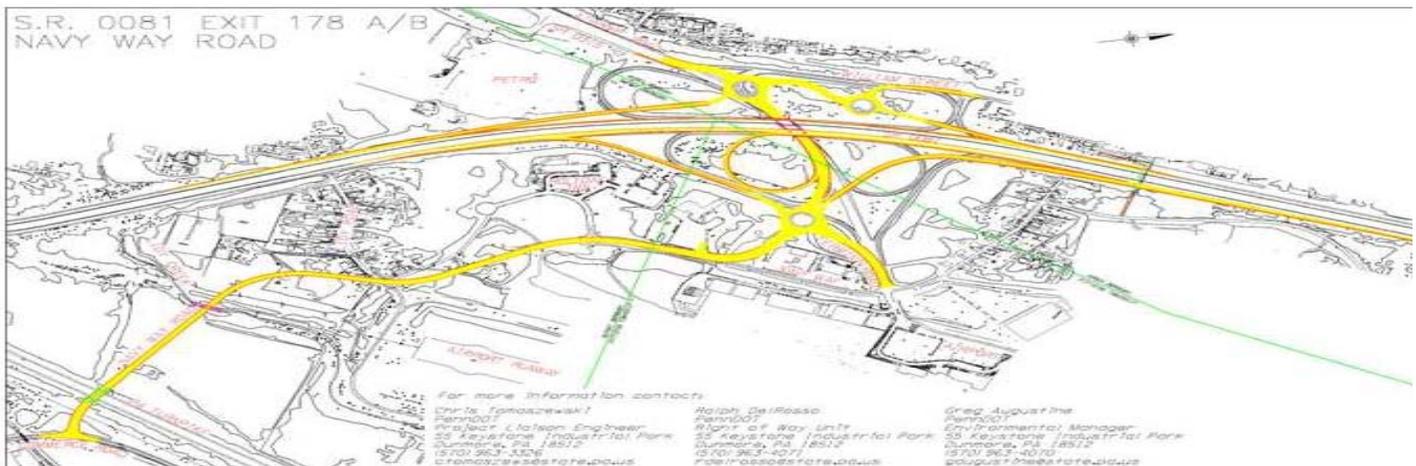
areas. Once the roadway is completed, trucks weighing less than 10.5 tons will be banned from using Suscon Road.

The new construction will open up unused areas of airport property to development opportunities for air freight, cargo and distribution facilities, as well as commercial development possibilities such as hotels and restaurants.

The roadway will be comprised of two 12-foot lanes with 8-foot shoulders. When completed, the new road will be maintained by Dupont Borough while Luzerne County will maintain the bridge and culvert.

The estimated let date for the access road is March 1, 2012. The road is estimated to be open to traffic in late 2015.

The estimated cost of the combined project is \$39 million.



Sketch of Exit 178 reconstruction/Airport Access Road project location.

Speaking of Roundabouts.....

A roundabout is defined as a circular intersection without traffic signals in which traffic flows continuously around a center island.

The first roundabout in the United States was constructed in a planned community near Las Vegas in 1990. Since then, they have become more popular throughout the country.

The most important characteristic of a roundabout is the yield-at-entry concept,

meaning that incoming traffic yields to traffic already in the circle.

Roundabouts have many benefits related to safety, traffic flow, air quality and aesthetics. Studies have shown that accident rates drop about 90% when roundabouts replace traditional intersections, including a 75% decrease in injury crashes and a 40% decrease in pedestrian crashes. They force drivers to slow down, which, in turn, improves safety, and they reduce the number of conflict points from 32 to just 8.

In contrast to conventional intersections, roundabouts allow for continuous traffic flow which decreases engine idling and helps improve air quality. The landscaping of the center islands and perimeters makes them more aesthetic options than traditional intersections.

For sample simulations of how roundabouts work, go to [“All About Roundabouts”](#) on the PENNDOT web site.

Governor's Transportation Funding Advisory Commission Takes Comprehensive Look at Ways To Increase Transportation Funds

Governor Corbett has created a Transportation Funding Advisory Commission (TFAC) to help him find solutions to the state's current transportation funding constraints.

Chaired by Transportation Secretary Barry Schoch, the Commission will investigate how to increase funds by developing financial options, evaluating ways to modernize Department of Transportation procedures, and delivering recommendations to the Governor on a Decade of Investment strategy before August 1, 2011.

Financial Options

At the initial meeting, the Secretary asked the commission to brainstorm on the three goals cited above. The group came up with 32 financial options for further consideration. The first two options relate to tolling roads and bridges; however, these options are limited by federal restrictions on interstate tolling. Other options include: vehicle license and registration fee increases with modifications to the frequency of permit renewal; raising the cap on the Oil Franchise Tax; shifting more of the State Police funding to the General Fund; Public/Private Partnerships; vehicle fees for local funding; a mileage tax; increased taxes on tires and tire disposal fees; and evaluation of the Motor License Fund.

Over a five-year period, the funding

options will be geared toward finding additional revenue of \$2.5 billion per year for all transportation systems.

Modernization

The commission came up with 26 potential options to modernize how PENNDOT does business including the following: outsourcing; traffic signal coordination; more frequent use of design/build techniques; and innovative technologies implementation. Commission member Tom Lawson said, "Modernization of the way PENNDOT conducts its business is already underway with more to be done upon completion of the final report this summer".



May 16, 2011 Meeting of the Transportation Funding Advisory Committee

Decade of Investment

Among the 16 options offered on the Decade of Investment were the following: safety construction zone improvement; increased use of alternative fuels; reduction of distracted driving and injury accidents; reduction of fuel consumption and an increased number of park-n-ride lots.

(A full listing of the options can be found at www.tfac.pa.gov in the minutes of the April 25th meeting.)

According to Governor Corbett's Executive Order creating the TFAC, the funding sources the commission proposes must be "reliable, dedicated, inflation-sensitive, and adaptive to changing environmental factors."

Finding new transportation funding sources is vital if the state wants to maintain its transportation system on a regular basis, let alone build new roads/bridges or other facilities.

The state is taking on the challenge of finding new funding sources for transportation because the word from the federal government is that states will have to do more with less when the next federal transportation bill is formulated.

The Commission hopes to forward their suggested funding options to Governor Corbett by the end of July.

State Transportation Commission Hearings To Kick Off 2013 TIP Update

The official beginning of the 2013 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) preparation will begin with the State Transportation Commission (STC) Hearings which will be held across the state in August and September.

Anyone wishing to testify in person is required to submit an electronic abstract, the preferred method for public comment, prior to the hearing.

Oral presentations are limited to five minutes. All presenters are urged to highlight important points of their previously-

submitted information rather than read their presentations verbatim.

Blank and sample abstract forms can be found at: <http://www.dot.state.pa.us>. Once on the site, click on "More News and Media" on the lower right side of the page; click on "Transportation Program Update"; click on "Twelve-Year Program"; finally, click on "2013 Transportation Project Abstract Form Electronic Submission".

Submission of electronic abstract forms must be submitted no later than one week prior to the STC hearing. The forms should

be completed and submitted on-line, but can also be mailed to:

Mr. Nolan Ritchie, Executive Secretary
State Transportation Commission

P.O. Box 3633

Harrisburg, PA 17105-3633

The hearing site for the Lackawanna/Luzerne MPO is the Shawnee Inn located at One River Road, Shawnee on the Delaware. Times for presentations have not yet been determined.

**LACKAWANNA/LUZERNE METROPOLITAN
PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

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Broad Street Corridor Project Update

Work on the 3.5-mile Broad Street Corridor project in Hazleton and West Hazleton kicked off on December 16, 2010.

Much work has been done on the project since then. Patricia Fritsky, Construction Manager for the job, provided the following status report on the progress being made.

Drainage work on the West Hazleton Borough section of Broad Street, from Madison to 15th Streets, was completed throughout the first two weeks of July. Excavation for the roadway, sidewalks and curbs, from Madison Street to Jefferson Street, began on July 11th.

Drainage work in downtown Hazleton, between Vine and Wyoming Streets, has been completed. Curbing and roadway widening work is well underway and will continue over the next several weeks. Sidewalk installation will begin shortly and is on track to be completed by

August 1st.

The Terrace section roadway widening is underway and some barrier moves are scheduled to advance the work.

According to Ms. Fritsky, "Although the wet spring and complicated utility in-

volvement have set us back in our schedule, we are going to be able to complete most work originally scheduled for this year. To make sure we complete sections, we may shorten the downtown and West Hazleton sections this year. The contractor and sub-contractors are working six days a week with approximately eight crews, along with additional utility crews, throughout the entire project. We expect this level of manpower to continue to maximize the amount of work we can accomplish this year.

The level of patience and understanding we've received from business owners, property owners, pedestrians and the traveling public has been outstanding and very much appreciated."

Pennsy Supply (Slusser Brothers) is the contractor for the \$27.4 million project which is expected to be completed by late 2013.



Drainage work underway along Broad Street