

Autumn

2004

CHUCK MATTEI
INTERCHANGE

LACKAWANNA/LUZERNE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

CONNECTIONS

Montage Mountain Road/Davis Street Exit Designated "Chuck Mattei Interchange"

On October 7, 2004 the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania honored the late Chuck Mattei by designating the Montage Mountain Road/Davis Street Exit as the "Chuck Mattei Interchange". Chuck served as District 4-0 Engineer/Executive for 17 years before his death in December, 2003.

Transportation Secretary Allen Biehler attended the unveiling of the signs along with many other dignitaries and special guests. "We at PENNDOT have been graced with many great leaders over the years", said Secretary Biehler. "Chuck was definitely one of the best. Chuck was so good for PENNDOT and so good for Northeastern Pennsylvania because he cared—cared about the transportation system and the people who use it each and every day."

The decision to honor Chuck in this way arose from a letter-writing campaign by the Montage Mountain Safety Awareness Team of which Chuck had been a member for many years. They contacted local legislators with their request and, a short time later, Senator Robert Mellow of Lackawanna County informed the team that he would introduce legislation to name Exit 182 in honor of Chuck.

Senate Bill 1095 was introduced in the Senate on April 26, 2004

by Senators Mellow, Musto, Stout, Madigan and Lemmond. Representative Belardi introduced a companion bill, House Bill 2594, on May 3. Other area legislators who co-sponsored the bill include Representatives Staback, Wansacz, Mundy, McCall, Blaum, Yudi-chak, Tigie, Hassey, Major, Lewis, Pickett, and Birmelin. The bill passed unanimously on May 24.

Joining the officials at the designation ceremony were Chuck's wife, Dwaine, and daughter Alissa, his mother Janet and his sister Janice. "The signs we unveil here today are just a small tribute to a man who did so much for this

area...and who was loved by so many people here," Secretary Biehler said. "New bridges, smoother roads, modern highways, rail and aviation improvements and new safety initiatives...those are the true legacy of a man who worked so hard to improve the quality of life of all our lives. And we will be eternally grateful for all he did for us."

The sign unveiling ceremony took place along the ramp connecting Davis Street and Montage Mountain Road to I-81 northbound. The \$20.4 million project to reconstruct the interchange was completed in September of 2003.



The following people attended the sign unveiling: from left to right - Gary Hoffman, Deputy Secretary for Highway Administration, Representatives Blaum and Mellow, Dwaine Mattei, Representatives Tigie, Musto, Wansacz, and Transportation Secretary Allen Biehler.

Projects Out For Bid

The following projects have been put out for bid in Harrisburg:

I-80 Grinding Project—will complete total grinding in Luzerne County. The project is located west of I-81 and includes some bridge repairs. Route 106, Salem Avenue Bridge in Carbondale—bridge replacement in downtown Carbondale featuring

sidewalk and drainage improvements.

I-81 Bridge Repair—will focus on area north of Scranton and will include a new deck on the bridge over I-81 at Clarks Summit as well as work on several other structures. Route 29 Bridge, Luzerne County—involves construction of new bridge about 5 miles north of US Route 11.

S. Franklin St. Bridge—replacement of presently-closed bridge in south Wilkes-Barre.

Guide Rail Improvements to the interstate system—estimated cost is over \$5 million.

Resurfacing, Luzerne County—24.76 miles. Estimated cost is \$2 million.

First Round of Home Town Streets/Safe Routes To School Applications Reviewed and Evaluated

Applications for the new transportation programs Home Town Streets and Safe Routes To School were reviewed and evaluated by the Lackawanna/Luzerne MPO Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) on Thursday, October 28 at District 4-0 headquarters.

The MPO received 15 eligible applications requesting a total of approximately \$6.4 million in federal funds. The MPO received about \$2.5 million for the program to be spent over a 4-year period.

The Department left the decision up to the MPOs as to whether those funds would be allocated during the first round of funding or spread out over 4 years.

The TAC received copies of all the eligible applications prior to their meeting on the 28th to review. The committee heard presentations from all the applicants at the meeting and evaluated each one according to the criteria set up by the Department. The end result was a prioritized list of projects. Since the TAC decided to allocate all the available funds during this first round, the funding was assigned to the

projects according to their numerical ranking until the money ran out.

The projects recommended for funding in Luzerne County are:

Dallas Borough Streetscape Revitalization: The project includes new sidewalks, tree removal, decorative lighting, bus shelters, bike racks, benches, trash receptacles and ADA compliant ramps;

Butler Township Safe Routes To School: This project involves providing a 5-foot walking/biking lane along both sides of E. County Road for students to walk to Drums Elementary School;

Hazleton & W. Hazleton Streetscape Improvements: This project involves streetscape elements such as lighting upgrades and sidewalk re-construction along the Broad Street Corridor in Hazleton City and W. Hazleton Borough;

Hanover Township Safe Routes To School: This project calls for new sidewalks, crosswalk upgrades, and curb cuts in the vicinity of Lee Park Elementary, Memorial Elementary, and Hanover High School.

The projects recommended for funding in Lackawanna County are:

Revitalization of 500 Block of Lackawanna Avenue: Among the planned improvements are the construction of a park in the rear of the buildings that border the railroad tracks used by Steamtown, and the creation of a mixed-use environment and center of cultural activity.

Lackawanna Valley Heritage Authority: This project is designated as a Safe Route To School project and involves the enhancement of a riverfront greenway and bike/pedestrian loop trail that will connect Scranton High School to downtown Scranton. There are also educational components to this project whereby the trail will be used as a learning tool for biology and earth science classes.

The projects not recommended during this application round are being forwarded to PennDOT Central Office for consideration of discretionary funds. The recommendations will not become official until they are approved by the STC in January, 2005.

Pennsylvania To Develop New State-Wide Long Range Transportation Plan

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation is in the process of developing a new statewide Long Range Transportation Plan, known as the Pennsylvania Mobility Plan. The Plan was launched in June, 2004 and is scheduled for completion in 2006.

Governor Rendell and Transportation Secretary Biehler have directed that the Mobility Plan address the following issues: the mobility needs of all Pennsylvanians; state and local system preservation; alternatives and connections between various

modes of transportation; the role of transportation in economic development; land use; safety; and the desires of PennDOT's customers.

Based on a technical analysis of transportation data, as well as the ideas and concerns of the public and people involved in transportation planning, the Mobility Plan will provide a framework of long-term objectives for the Commonwealth that will guide the development of specific transportation projects.

The first regional outreach effort will occur in the first quarter of 2005. Public input will be used to make choices among the Mobility Plan alternatives, and to help guide future decision-making.

For more information about the Mobility Plan, visit the project web site, www.pamobilityplan.com, or contact PennDOT project manager Brian Wall at 717.772.0827 or via e-mail at bwall@state.pa.us.

Bridging The Gap (continued from page 3)

"Next year, bridges between Clarks Summit and Route 438 will be addressed", Mr. Doble explained. "The Department is currently developing a project to look at bridges in the I-81 corridor between Wilkes-Barre and Scranton because of the severely-deteriorated deck conditions on some of those structures. This will be a

difficult and expensive undertaking. Unfortunately, some of these [bridge repair] projects will need to be addressed before the corridor is widened."

DE Steve Shimko echoed Mr. Doble's views, "We'll need to address these decks to prevent emergency situations which jeopardize both the public and our own

maintenance and contractor crews." Some ways in which the bridge situation can be improved include: gradually increasing the maintenance funding, transferring funds from the interstate paving pot to bridges, advancing the I-81 corridor widening project, and increasing the base funding levels for bridges.

Bridging the Gap—The State of Bridges in Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties

At the MPO meetings held in September/October, Assistant District Engineer for Design, Bob Doble, presented the Technical and Coordinating Committees an all too realistic view of some of the bridges in Luzerne and Lackawanna Counties. The purpose of the presentation was to alert the MPO about the growing need to direct funds to the repair, rehabilitation, and replacement of several bridges in the MPO region.

System Overview

There are 412 state-owned bridges in Lackawanna County and 558 state-owned bridges in Luzerne County, many of which are aging and falling into disrepair. The amount of time it takes to complete a project, coupled with the conservative amount of funds assumed for the development of the 2005-2008 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), are two factors contributing to the deteriorating bridge situation.

Bridge Rating Systems

There are four ways to rate bridges: Maintenance Deficiency Rating, Sufficiency Rating, Structural Deficient Status, and Posting.

The Maintenance Deficiency Rating (MDR) method assigns a number to every bridge on a scale of 1 to 100 based on their physical condition and level of deterioration, including load capacity, bridge deck condition, superstructure, substructure, bridge width, and approach alignment. A rating of 100 indicates "worst condition" while a rating of 0 indicates the structure is in new or near-new condition. This number helps reflect the maintenance conditions of each structure.

Between January and July of 2004, the number of bridges with an MDR of less than 50 fluctuated from 214 to 211 in Lackawanna County. In Luzerne County, the number of bridges falling below a score of 50 ranged from 233 to 241.

To improve these numbers, PENNDOT needs increased funding and needs to contract out some of the bridge work to speed up the process. The current staffing and

funding levels allow only about 70 bridges to be repaired each year.

The Sufficiency Rating (SR) method assigns a number to every bridge on a scale of zero to 100 based on their structural adequacy, serviceability, and functional obsolescence components. A rating of 100 indicates the structure is in an "Entirely Structurally Sufficient" condition, while a rating of 0 indicates the bridge is in an "Entirely Structurally Insufficient" condition. A score of less than 50 qualifies the bridge for replacement, while a score of less than 80 qualifies the bridge for rehabilitation. Thus, this set of criteria is the most important of them all.

In Lackawanna County, there are 31 bridges with a rating of less than 50 and 151 with a rating a less than 80 out of 412 total bridges.

In Luzerne County, there are 55 bridges with a rating of less than 50, and 262 bridges with a rating of less than 80 out of a total of 558.

Structurally Deficient (SD) ratings for bridges vary from 0 to 9. Bridges are considered structurally deficient if they have a rating of 4 or less for the following elements: bridge deck, superstructure, substructure, or culvert. They are also considered structurally deficient if they have a rating of 2 or less for structural condition or waterway adequacy.

Deck area of bridges in Lackawanna County totals 1,998,744 square feet, of

which 330,861 square feet are structurally deficient. Deck area of Luzerne County bridges totals 2,771,696 square feet of which 303,161 are structurally deficient.

There are 7 posted bridges in Lackawanna County and 10 in Luzerne County. Although the structural deficiency rating is not necessarily relevant to posted bridges, the lower the structural deficiency rating, the more likely it is that a posting will occur. However, some bridges that are in good condition get posted because they were not designed to carry current legal loads. (The legal load limit is 40 tons.)

According to Mr. Doble, the condition of bridges in Luzerne and Lackawanna Counties is similar to other PennDOT districts across the state. "We are better than some districts, but not all. Our problem is that our bridges are old and many [are] in a critical state."

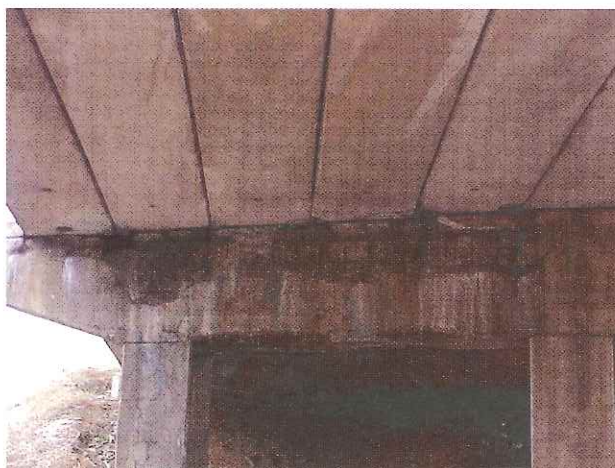
The most heavily-traveled bridges are found on the interstates. These bridges are also the most heavily-salted which contributes to their deterioration."

On the interstates in Luzerne and Lackawanna Counties there are 33 mainline structurally-deficient bridges (mostly substructure issues) and 3 ramp structurally-deficient bridges. 13 of these bridges are in the Focus 81 Corridor, the stretch of I-81 between Nanticoke and Clarks Summit. There are no posted bridges on the interstate.

In regard to the structurally-deficient bridges on the interstate system, Mr. Doble explained, "The problem is serious because the interstate system gives us few options for repair that do not disturb travel or expose our workers to danger. Unfortunately, some of these repairs will have to be done with either inconvenience [to drivers] or [construction of] temporary structures to prevent further emergency repairs."

Projects Underway

Last year the Department bid a major subsurface repair project on I-81. Bridges at Route 29, Route 502, and Business Route 6 underwent major work. (See page 2).



Ramp over I-81, northbound and southbound in Abington Township shows signs of spalling - the deterioration of concrete at the top 2-3 inch level. This project will be bid in December.



**LACKAWANNA/LUZERNE METROPOLITAN
PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

Luzerne County Planning Commission
Penn Place Building
20 N. Pennsylvania Avenue
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18701

Telephone: 825-1560

Fax: 825-6362

E-Mail: Nancy.Snee@luzernecounty.org

Contact: Nancy Snee

**PENNDOT District 4-0
web site:
www.neparoads.com**

PENNDOT Developing Model Access Management Ordinances

PENNDOT is taking on a new role in its efforts to link land use and transportation planning via the development of model access ordinances.

Access management refers to the careful planning of the location, design and operation of driveways, median openings, interchanges, and street connections. The purpose of access management is to provide access to land development in a way that preserves the safety and efficiency of the transportation system and promotes orderly development. This can be accomplished by limiting and consolidating access along major roadways, and promoting a supporting street system with unified access and circulation systems for development.

The Department is developing model ordinances for municipalities that choose to manage access points along both local and state roads within their boundaries. In contrast to the belief that municipalities have no control over the approval of Highway Occupancy Permits (HOPs) in their area, Pennsylvania case law recognizes that

HOPs are subject to ordinances enacted by municipalities that may contain more stringent minimum safety requirements. In other words, PENNDOT regulations do not necessarily preempt local land use ordinances. In the court case, *Ice vs. Cross Roads Borough*, Commonwealth Court ruled that a landowner seeking access to a state highway must be given permission from both PENNDOT and the municipality in which the property lies.

The main reasons for developing these model ordinances are to assist municipalities in providing standards and access management practices that can be applied to new development, and to facilitate better coordination between the Department and local government. Municipalities that anticipate increased traffic levels due to increased development can use these access management ordinances to help reduce traffic congestion and maintain a better quality of life for those using the roadways.

Parsons Brinckerhoff and Traffic Planning & Design, Inc., the consultants responsible for developing the model ordinances, have pro-

duced three technical memoranda—Access Management State of Practice, Access Management Best Practices, and Identification of Legislative and Policy Barriers, all of which are available for review on PENNDOT's web site (www.dot.state.pa.us). The model ordinances will contain techniques applicable to individual parcels and roadways, as well as more comprehensive practices such as official mapping and zoning overlays. They will also provide guidelines and standards for subdivision regulations on access management techniques such as driveway spacing standards, safe sight distance, shared driveways, left turn lanes, frontage roads, and other best management practices.

Following development of the model ordinances, PENNDOT will hold workshops in eight locations across the state, including Scranton, in the spring of 2005. As part of the half-day sessions, attendees will receive training handbooks which will include the model ordinances. Brochures announcing the workshops will be mailed to all municipalities and counties in the state.