



EXIT 46 GRAND OPENING

Hailed as a gateway to the future for the Wilkes-Barre area by Transportation Secretary Bradley Mallory, Exit 46 of I-81 officially opened to traffic on September 30.

Politicians, planners, engineers, representatives of the business community, members of the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins, and interested citizens gathered at the spot where Exit 46 intersects with Highland Park Boulevard to mark the occasion. With hockey stick scissors in hand, Rep. Kevin Blaum, Bradley Mallory, and Penguin team member, Dennis Bonvie, cut the ribbon that allowed the first vehicle-a zamboni-to christen the new road.

Chuck Mattei, District 4-0 Engineer, and all the speakers, applauded the cooperation exhibited by all those involved in securing the funding for the project, and praised the monumental effort put forth by the design engineers and the construction crew.

In order to build connecting ramps from I-81 to Highland Park Boulevard at an acceptable grade, the project engineers designed the exit ramps to go underneath the



'TUX', the Mascot of the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins poses with officials at the ribbon cutting for the Exit 46 project. FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Chuck Mattei, PaDOT District 4-0 Engineer; Rep. Phyllis Mundy, 120th District; Armand Filipini, Senator Musto's Office; Lisa Baker, Governor Ridge's Northeast Office; Rep. George Hasay, 117th District; John Levitski, PP&L; Stephen Barrouk, President & CEO, Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Business & Industry; Rep. Kevin Blaum, 121st District; Secretary of Transportation Bradley L. Mallory; Tom Makowski, Chair, Luzerne County Commissioners; Joseph "Red" Jones, Luzerne County Commissioners; Ron Ertley, State Transportation Commission; Senator Charles Lemmond, 20th District; Rep. Thomas Tighe 118th District; Paul Maher, Congressman Kanjorski's Office; Robert Delescavage, Mayor, Wilkes-Barre Township; Rep. John T. Yudichak, 119th District.

interstate and two new bridges to support the traffic traveling over the exit ramps. This design minimized traffic delays during construction for the 45,000 vehicles that travel that part of the interstate daily.

Construction crews displaced more than 2 million cubic yards of dirt over the duration of the project. Disposing of this amount of dirt usually poses problems, but in this instance, it proved to be a solution to another problem. The construction crew used the fill to convert

old coal mine lands located along the highway into prime development property.

A related project, the widening of Highland Boulevard and connection to Mundy Street, is expected to start construction next year. Mundy Street will also be widened from where it connects to Highland Park Boulevard to where it intersects Route 115 (Kidder Street). Improvements to Coal Street are also planned to help make Exit 46 a direct gateway to Wilkes-Barre City.

Transportation Planning: What's An MPO?

Picture this. You're driving somewhere in Lackawanna or Luzerne County and find yourself stuck at a traffic light for several minutes. As you sit there trapped in your vehicle, mumbling to yourself on how late you're going to

be, (or some other choice words), one of the things you think to yourself is, "They should do something about this intersection!"

Well, the "they" you want to correct the problem is most likely the MPO, or

Metropolitan Planning Organization.

The MPO is the decision-making body for all transportation projects that receive federal and/or state funding in Luzerne and Lackawanna Counties. It consists of three

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- *Upcoming Projects: All of the listed projects will be let during the fourth quarter (Oct.-Dec.) of 1999:*
- *Route 307-Intersection of Moosic St. & Meadow Ave.; additional turning lanes on Moosic St.*
- *Route 924-Hazleton Gateway Enhancement Project; scenic improvements along Rte. 924*
- *Sans Souci Parkway-Replace open grid bridge & realign highway, just south of Wilkes-Barre*
- *Middle Road Bridge-Replacement of 17-ton posted bridge on S. Main St. located in Hanover Twp.*
- *Noise Abatement Walls-I-81, Exit 49 in Avoca; includes realignment of William Street*
- *Huntington Creek Bridge (SR 4024) - replace narrow, posted bridge located in Ross Twp.*
- *US Route 6-Widening to 5 lanes between the Turnpike and the "Notch"; new traffic signal*
- *Route 93-Tomhicken Rd. to 19th St.; roadway improvements & traffic signal at Deer Run Rd., W. Hazleton Borough*

Governor Robert P. Casey Highway Dedicated

Lieutenant Governor Mark Schweiker waved the checkered flag and two Corvette convertibles drove through the ribbon to mark the grand opening of the Robert P. Casey Highway, formerly known as the Lackawanna Valley Industrial Highway. The \$475 million highway connects Scranton and Carbondale and provides northern Lackawanna County, western Wayne County and the southeast section of Susquehanna County a direct link to I-81.

The highway follows the same path as the old gravity railroad. Transportation Secretary Brad Mallory, who was also on hand for the grand opening, said, "Just like the Gravity Railroad opened up a new market for the Lackawanna Valley in the 1880's, the Robert P. Casey Highway will open up new economic opportunities for this valley in the new millennium."

Although the final design for the highway was completed in 1973, construction did not start until 1994. Over 17 million cubic yards of earth and rock were moved to build the new highway.

Exit 2 of the new highway was designated the Representative Joseph G. Wargo Exit. The families of former Governor Casey and the late Representative Wargo were presented with mock highway signs at

"The Governor Robert P. Casey Highway will open up new economic opportunities for this valley in the new millennium."



Lieutenant Governor Mark Schweiker presents Mrs. Ellen Casey and the Casey family children with a framed replica of the Governor Robert P Casey Highway sign.

the ceremony. The signs honor both men for their untiring efforts to construct the new roadway.

The Governor Robert P. Casey Highway is now designated as US Route 6. The section of I-81 between the Governor Robert P.

Casey Highway and Exit 58 (Clarks Summit) is now known as I-81 and U.S. Route 6. The section of Route 6 near the Viewmont Mall will now be known as Business Route 6.

The ribbon-cutting ceremony ironically took place on the 40th anniversary of the day the first section of I-81 opened to traffic in Lackawanna County.

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Transportation Planning: What's An MPO?

committees—an Advisory Committee, a Technical Committee, and a Coordinating Committee. The members of these committees represent all modes of transportation—aviation, rail, transit, highways, and bicycle/pedestrian needs. In addition, there are representatives from PaDOT, Luzerne and Lackawanna Counties, and the Cities of Scranton, Wilkes-Barre, and Hazleton. These committees meet about four times a year to discuss a variety of transportation issues.

The Technical Committee has 18 voting members who deal with the "nuts and bolts" of issues and then make recommendations to the Coordinating Committee.

The Coordinating Committee has 11 voting members who review the recommendations made by the Technical Committee and make policy decisions.

The Advisory Committee currently has

22 members, eleven from Luzerne County and eleven from Lackawanna County. The Committee acts in an advisory capacity to the Technical Committee.

Chuck Mattei, District 4-0 Engineer, serves as Chairman of the MPO. Harry Lindsay, Planning Director for Lackawanna County, serves as Vice-Chair, and Adrian Merolli, Planning Director for Luzerne County, serves as Secretary.

When asked about the role the MPO plays in the transportation planning process, Chairman Mattei replied, "The existence of the MPO has de-centralized the transportation planning process, giving local governments a 'hands on' role in deciding which projects get done. It's also broadened our concept of transportation planning. We no longer limit our plans to highways. We now seek ways to move

people in a variety of ways."

The origin of the MPO dates back to 1964 when Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties entered into an agreement with PaDOT "to provide for a continuing, comprehensive, and coordinated transportation planning process" for the two-county area. At that time the bi-county planning organization was referred to as the Lackawanna/Luzerne Transportation Study (LLTS). This term is still used to identify our MPO from the thirteen other designated MPOs across the state.

All MPO meetings are open to the public. The MPO Committees meet quarterly at the PaDot District 4-0 Office in Dunmore. The dates and times of the meetings are listed in the legal advertisements in the Citizens' Voice, Standard Speaker, and the Scranton Tribune.

Luzerne County Updates Highway/Bridge Priority List

Every two years, the Luzerne County Planning Commission updates its County Highway/Bridge Priority List. Getting a project on the County Priority List is the first step municipalities take in getting a project on the Twelve Year Program. The Planning Commission contacts all municipalities within Luzerne County, as well as other interested parties, to solicit projects for the Priority List. The respondents are required to submit the name of the project, its geographic boundaries, the municipality in which it is located, a description of the project, and an estimated cost.

As a part of each update, the Planning Commission deletes all projects which have been let for construction from the current list. The Planning Commission staff and Executive Director Adrian Merolli, review all the new projects and the

status of the projects currently on the list to come up with a recommended ranking.

At their meeting on August 26, 1999, the Planning Commission heard testimony from several parties-elected officials and/or their representatives, people from the business community, and interested citizens regarding projects they wanted to see placed on the priority list, or have an existing project given a higher ranking. Based on this testimony and the recommendations made by the staff, the Planning Commission prioritized 68 highway projects, 15 state bridge projects, and 42 local bridge projects.

Listed below are the top ten highway projects, and the top priority state and local bridge projects:

1. Sans Souci/LCCC Connector

2. Coal Street
 3. PA Rte. 115/I-81, Exit 46 Connector
 4. I-81, Exit 49 Improvements
 5. PA Rte. 924 Improvements
 6. W-B/Scranton Airport Access Road
 7. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
 8. Hazleton Airport Beltway
 9. Broad Street Corridor (Hazleton)
 10. Intermodal Facility, W-B City
- State Bridge: Carey Avenue Bridge
Local Bridge: West Nanticoke Bridge

For more detailed information on the priority list, contact Adrian Merolli or Nancy Snee at the Luzerne County Planning Commission.

State Transportation Commission Hearings Held

The State Transportation Commission (STC) is holding hearings across the Commonwealth during the fall. These hearings represent the first step in the development of the Twelve Year Program (TYP). Hearings were held in the Wilkes-Barre area on October 14 at the Woodlands Inn & Resort.

The Twelve Year Program is a listing of transportation projects that the Department of Transportation, more commonly known as PADOT, deems can be reasonably funded within a 12-year period. The program addresses all modes of transportation-rail, aviation, transit, highways & bridges, and rails-to-trails. It is a fiscally-constrained document,

which means that it can only list the number of projects for which funding is available.

Act 120, passed in 1970, requires the preparation of the TYP. The STC takes testimony every two years. Once hearings are completed, the STC meets to decide which

projects will be placed on the TYP. The Commission selects projects that meet the transportation needs of the state, taking into consideration the preservation and expansion of the existing transportation network and the promotion of economic development.

The STC consists of 15 members. Brad Mallory, Secretary of Transportation chairs the Committee. Four members of the General Assembly also serve on the Committee.

The remaining 10 members are appointed by the Governor. Ron Ertley of Ertley Motorworld and Tech Aviation, was recently appointed to the STC by Governor Tom Ridge.





**LACKAWANNA/LUZERNE METROPOLITAN
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Bi-County Bicycle Plan Study Underway

Aware of the increased interest in recreation and tourism in the country, and with an eye to reducing vehicle miles traveled, the Department of Transportation recently initiated a Bicycle Study for the Commonwealth. The consultant hired by PaDOT to conduct the study came up with five possible state-wide routes - a northern east/west route, a southern east-west route, and three north-south routes - one in the eastern, central, and western portions of the state.

To further the work begun by PaDOT, the state requested that each MPO and Local Development District (LDD) undertake bicycle studies in their areas.

With help from the Advisory Committee, the Lackawanna/Luzerne MPO is studying a north/south bicycle route. The bike route will start in the northwestern part of Lackawanna County, where it will tie into portions of the statewide Route 6 northern east/west route, then travel through the center of Lackawanna County and connect to

Luzerne County in the vicinity of Main St. in Duryea. From this point, the route will travel south down the Wyoming Valley along both sides of the Susquehanna River as far as the Carey Avenue Bridge. At this point, the east side route will travel west over the bridge and merge with the west route as it continues south, utilizing portions of the levee trail and the Susquehanna Warrior's Trail along Route 11. Both counties will try to incorporate as many proposed off-road trails into their plan as possible. However, some portions of the plan will include on-road segments. The MPO will try to keep these segments on low volume roadways whenever possible.

The proposed bike study is one of several that are being planned for the 2-county area. The first mile of the Back Mountain Trail officially opened last summer. A 1.5 mile segment of the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail was dedicated in October, 1998. These trails are just two of the 100 trails that are now available for Pennsylvanians to enjoy.



Candice Alaimo enjoys some bike-riding on the Back Mountain Trail.