

Fall

2001

LACKAWANNA/LUZERNE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

CONNECTIONS

Improvements Scheduled at Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Airport

The extension of the airport access road around the perimeter of the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Airport has been planned for several years. The stumbling blocks delaying construction of this project have been determining who would be responsible for the 20% share required of all local projects receiving federal funds, and who would own the road once it is constructed.

Usually, the municipality in which a local road project site is located is responsible for the 20% local share. The Airport, however, is unique in that it lies within four municipalities in two counties, and is governed by the Commissioners of Luzerne and Lackawanna County.

The Commissioners of Lackawanna and Luzerne County recently formed a unique partnership with the Airport Board and PENNDOT to solve that problem. The partners have agreed that the Airport will

donate the land on which the access road will be built, including the Right of Way (ROW). This land will account for most of the local share. The remainder will be assumed by the state.

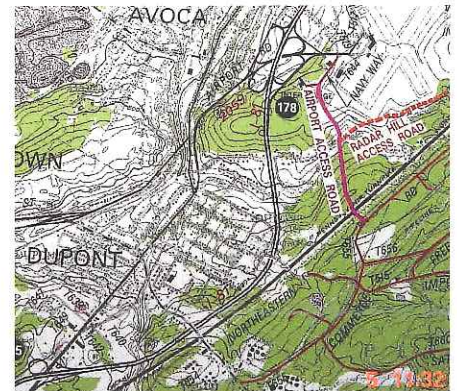
In addition to donating the land, the Airport Board will assume ownership of the road. By assuming ownership, the Airport staff will be responsible for maintaining the road.

The access road will extend from the main entrance of the airport along Navy Way, continue around the southern end of the extended runway to a point near Radar Hill. The road will then cross the PA Turnpike and connect with Commerce Boulevard at the Eastern Distribution Center, the Foreign Trade

Zone, and the Volgerbacher Industrial Park located in Pittston Township.

The project is estimated to cost \$8 million. \$1.5 million in funds earmarked for the project by Congressman Paul Kanjorski will help move the project forward.

Design of the access road should be completed in 2004. Construction is estimated to begin in 2005 and completed in 2007.



Schematic of the improvements slated for the Airport Access Road and Exit 178 (49) Interchange.

RECONSTRUCTED EXIT 178 (49) RAMPS TO EASE TRAFFIC WOES

In conjunction with the Airport Access Road Extension project, PENNDOT will replace the existing cloverleaf interchange at Exit 178 (49) with new on and off ramps designed to handle the increasing traffic volumes, especially truck traffic, now being experienced in the vicinity of the airport. Many of these trucks exit the interstate to get to the Petro Truck Stop located in Dupont Borough.

Numerous trucks have experienced difficulties navigating the sharp curves of the ramps at this interchange. Some have overturned causing traffic back-ups and asso-

ciated mishaps.

Some trucks have taken the wrong exit and ended up at the airport entrance. In trying to turn around and head back to I-81, some of these trucks have damaged airport property.

The designs for the new interchange and the airport access road will be combined to provide a safe, efficient route from I-81 to the airport and other economic development sites in the vicinity.

If all goes as planned, preliminary engineering and final design of the

access road and the new interchange should be completed in 2004. Construction of the two projects is slated to begin in 2005 with completion expected in 2007. The cost of the new interchange is estimated to be \$20 million.



Lackawanna County Commissioner Joseph Corcoran discusses the airport improvements at the September 6 news conference.

General Aviation: "Commercial Aviation's Right Arm"

Mention airports or flying to your average person and most would automatically think of commercial aviation-flying on one of the major air carriers for business or vacations or other personal business. Most people would probably be surprised to know that General Aviation (GA) accounts for 90% of all air traffic in the United States. By definition, all non-commercial flights, including corporate and private, come under the auspices of General Aviation. (Military flights come under a separate category.)

All GA activities are handled by Fixed Based Operators (FBOs). All commercial activity in every airport in the country receives assistance from an FBO.

There are two FBOs located within the Wyoming Valley-Wyoming Valley Aviation, Inc., located at the Wyoming Valley Airport in Forty-Fort, and Tech Aviation, located at the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport in Avoca.

As the FBO, Tech Aviation owns and operates the fuel farm that supplies fuel to all aircraft at the airport including commercial flights.

Tech Aviation has been the FBO for the W-B/Scranton Airport for the past 12 years. In addition to supplying fuel, Tech Aviation also does maintenance on all of its fleet as well as some minor work on the commercial airliners. The facility offers many services to local corporations and businesses, primarily in arranging charter flights.

John Millington, Manager of Charter Sales, explained, "We employ 5 full-time and 2 part-time pilots for our charter division. Our two turbo prop planes seat 8 people and can fly our clients to any destination in North America. We'll be adding two aircraft to our fleet within the next 30 days-one 6-passenger and one 4-passenger."

The 4-passenger aircraft is a Falcon 10 jet noted for its speed. According to Mr. Millington, this jet can get passengers to Florida in about 2 1/2 Hours. The six-passenger aircraft is a Cessna 414 owned by Andretti Aviation. Chartering flights can be more convenient and economical for local businesses, especially for 1-day trips. Tech Aviation can get clients to smaller airports not serviced by commercial carriers, airports that may be located closer to their ultimate destination. Clients also save time by not having to leave for the airport hours ahead of time. They can show up 10 min-



Courtesy of Earl & Sedor Photo

utes before their flight, park at the front door, unload their bags, and be on their way. If needed, rental cars at the destination can be arranged by Tech Aviation-all for retail cost.

Besides arranging charter flights, Tech Aviation also leases both passenger and cargo planes. The facility has several types of aircraft suitable for this service ranging in size from the Lockheed L-1011 to the DC-9. Smaller planes are also available.

In addition to business charters, Tech Aviation operates the only Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and VA approved Federal Aviation Regulation 141 flight school found in eastern Pennsylvania. According to Millington, "People think that most pilots learn to fly in the military, but that is no longer the case. Civilian schools actually supply most of the pilots to the airline industry."

Luzerne County Community College has offered a 2-year curriculum in aviation for 9 years. Students enrolled in this program achieve an Associate in Applied Science degree that will prepare them to become professional pilots or airline/airport managers.

For the past 2 years, Marywood University has worked with Tech Aviation to develop an Aviation Management Program consisting of the following three components: Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration, Aviation Management Major, and Pilot Ground & Air Training Certification. About 25% of Tech's 92 students are enrolled in one of these college programs.

Mr. Millington, who also serves as the liaison between Tech Aviation and the 2 college programs, explained, "We have 5 flight instructors and 7 aircraft available to teach our students. Since we began teaching in 1989 about 10 or 11 of our students have gone on to fly for commercial carriers."

People interested in flying as a hobby only can also learn the skills they need at Tech Aviation. Aspiring pilots can receive all the necessary training to get a private pilot's license in 6 months. About 60 private pilots currently store their planes at Tech Aviation.

Tech Aviation employs 50 people, 35 full-time and 15 part-time and does approximately \$4 million in sales/year. According to Frank Paczewski, President of the facility, "Our business is very dependent on how the commercial part of the airport goes. That's why we're excited about the proposed improvements slated for the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport as well as the extension of the airport access road. General aviation is commercial aviation's right arm. These improvements should attract more carriers, both passenger and cargo. All of those planes will need fuel and that's where we come in."

When asked about future plans, Paczewski thinks that Tech Aviation's geographic location puts them in a perfect place to serve as a major hub in the flight industry, and feels that Tech will continue to expand operations to accommodate business growth in the area.

For more information on Tech Aviation, contact John Millington at 655-5999.



A 4 passenger Falcon 10 jet will soon be added to the Tech Aviation Fleet.

Wellness Trail Action Plan in Progress

In 1997, the Healthy Northeastern Pennsylvania Initiative conducted a community health survey of Luzerne and Lackawanna County residents to identify the key health needs of the region.

Among the findings of that survey were the following:

1 in 4 people who responded to the survey are moderately or seriously overweight;

When compared to the general United States population, more persons in the 2-county area *never* exercise.

Findings like this prompted the Wellness Trails idea. The purpose of the Wellness Trail program is to develop a partnership with area employers, schools, and health care facilities in order to bring about in-

creased physical activity for their employees, students, and patients, and to identify sites where trails can be developed near places of employment, homes, schools, and health care facilities.

The Wellness Trails Committee is working with the Greenway Alliance and other trail organizations in the area to expand the opportunities whereby those most in need of exercise can more easily access the existing trails and those planned for the future.

In some instances this connection can be achieved very simply by providing maps depicting the location of the nearest trail and directions on how to get to that trail. For example, the Manor Care Nursing Home on Second Avenue in Kingston is situated just a few blocks from the Levee Trail. A map and perhaps directional arrows could direct resi-

dents to Pierce Street where they could pick up the trail at the Pierce Street Bridge.

The elderly need assistance while walking. Placing hand rails along entryways to trails would be helpful. Having frequent benches along a trail where elderly walkers could rest would be beneficial. The elderly also feel more comfortable in wide-open spaces rather than confined trails. In that respect, the Levee Trail is ideal for older trail users.

The Wellness Trail Steering Committee is finalizing an Action Plan that will be used to help make Northeastern PA a healthier place to live.

For more information on the Wellness Trails Program, contact the Pennsylvania Environmental Council at 270-4420.

Tech Aviation: Home To Many Private Pilots' Planes

Attorney Brad Kurlancheek of Wilkes-Barre is one of many area private pilots that fly out of Tech Aviation at the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport.

His fascination with airplanes began when he was a young boy. "I loved airplanes as a kid, but I also had this fear of heights." He knew he needed to conquer that fear if he wanted to go from gazing up into the sky watching planes to actually flying them. "In 1986, I enrolled at the Spartan School of Aeronautics in Tulsa, Oklahoma to learn how to fly. At first it was difficult to get past the fear of heights, but the more often I went up, the easier it became to forget that I was several thousand feet in the air. There's so much to think about when you're flying, but that's one of the reasons I love it."

It took Kurlancheek between 60 and 70 hours of flying time to get his pilot's license. Since then he has gone on to become certified as a flight instructor and has attained a commercial license which allows him to get paid for flying.

Although he did not learn to fly locally, Kurlancheek thinks that Tech Aviation

offers both students and private pilots excellent training and experience. "Because the airport at Avoca is a towered facility, it offers students more complex training. They learn how to communicate with the tower via radio work which is something you can't get from a non-towered facility. The airport also has a long, wide runway, and that makes it a safe place to practice take-offs and landings."

Kurlancheek bought his own plane in 1997.

"It's a classic—a 1961 Piper Colt. It seats two and has a cloth-covered exterior. Whenever I want to take it out, I just call the folks at Tech and they fuel it up and get it out of the hangar for me."

When asked why flying appeals to him, Kurlancheek responded, "Well, on a practical level, you can get places more quickly by flying than driving, and it's just a great feeling

being up in the sky. It gives you a different perspective on life. I also like the thinking aspect of flying, and being part of the fraternity of pilots. It gives you an immediate bond."

Weather permitting, Kurlancheek can be found most Saturday mornings doing his pre-flight check before taking off to a fly-in at one of the many regional airports in the Northeast where he enjoys meeting fellow pilots who share his love of flying.



Atty. Kurlancheek standing beside his 1961 Piper Colt.

Published by the Luzerne County
Planning Commission
Luzerne County Courthouse Annex
Corner of N. River & Jackson
Streets
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18711

Phone: 825-1560
Fax: 825-6362
E-mail: planzone@epix.net
Contact: Nancy Snee

Check out the PENNDOT web site
at www.dot.state.pa.us
Click on "regional information" for
updates from District 4-0

Kingston Reach to Be Dedicated October 23, 2001

The 3.5 mile section of the Levee Trail, known as the Kingston Reach, will be dedicated on October 23, 2001. This section stretches from the North Crossvalley Expressway at the intersection of Church Street and Rutter Avenue in Kingston to US Route 11 in Edwardsville.

The Kingston Reach is one of four segments that comprise the Levee Trail, created from the dikes raised to protect the Wyoming Valley from a flooding Susquehanna River.

In addition to providing a scenic recreational avenue for walkers, joggers, rollerbladers, and bikers, the Levee Trail offers a glimpse into the history of the Wyoming Valley via kiosks situated at tree islands (sitting areas) and other spots along the trail.

From an historical perspective, the Kingston Reach is known as the Anthracite Heritage Walk. Here, trail users will "meet the immigrants who gave their sweat and lives to the Industrial Revolution."

The first kiosk along this stretch defines levees, their purposes, and how they're made. At the first tree island, people will read about King Coal, the miners who

toiled to excavate the "black diamonds", its emergence as the major industry in the area, and the railroads that hauled the coal to market.

Farther along the trail, pumping stations are explained-how they work, why there are a series of them, and how they are housed.

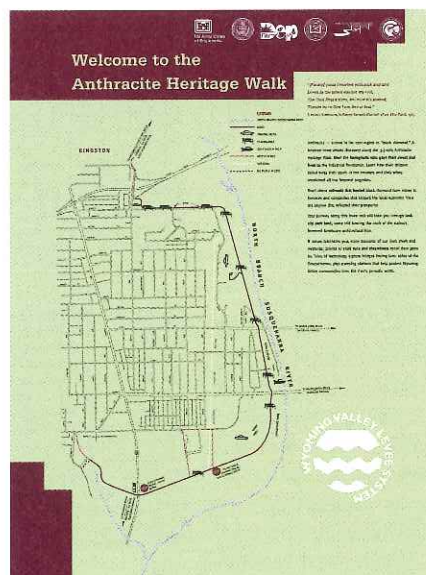
The many parks located along the river as well as their unique environmental assets are detailed as you walk through Nesbitt and Kirby Parks.

As you approach or walk under the Market St. Bridge, you can read about how the New York architects Carrere & Hastings designed the span to reflect King Coal's prosperity.

As you near the end of the Reach, you can read about Toby's Creek, one of the Susquehanna's main tributaries. Did you know that Toby's Creek was named for a mentally retarded Indian boy who lived in a cave near the site where the creek flows into the river? This is just one of numerous interesting facts to be learned while walking along the Kingston Reach.

Two sections of the Levee Trail have yet to be completed - the Plymouth Passage which will explore the diversity of cultures and industries that shaped that borough, and the Riverside Ramble which details the architecture, business, arts, and agricultural history of Wilkes-Barre City and Hanover Township.

All four sections of the entire 15-mile Levee Trail are estimated to be finished by 2003.



Schematic of the Kingston Reach segment of the Levee Trail.