

Fall/Winter

2000/2001



LACKAWANNA/LUZERNE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

CONNECTIONS

"JUST HOP ON THE BUS, GUS"...

David Darby is every transit operator's dream. Why? Because, in an area where transit riders are primarily "captive" riders, (those who have no other means of transportation available to them) he chooses to ride the bus to work rather than drive. In fact, he and his wife, Jennifer Lavery, who also rides the bus to work, sold their second car, and use their remaining car for trips that are not feasible by bus.

David Darby started working at Alltel located on Public Square in Wilkes-Barre in October of 1998 and has been commuting by bus since then. Prior to working at Alltel, David worked for a firm in Clarks Summit which was not accessible by bus. One of his reasons for leaving that position was to work at a place that could be reached by bus.

So, why would someone sacrifice the convenience of

driving to work and ride the bus instead? As it turns out, for very altruistic reasons—to conserve energy and to reduce automobile exhaust emissions that contribute to the formation of ozone, a pollutant formed when Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC) and Nitrous Oxides (NOx) combine with sunlight.

An average car travels 11,000 miles per year. During that time it produces 42 lbs. of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC), 48 lbs. of Nitrous Oxides (NOx), and 290 lbs. of Carbon Monoxide (CO).

"I would use the bus for other trips, but limited evening and Saturday service make that difficult," David explains. He also thinks that lower fares would attract more people to the bus, but realizes that only increased ridership could make it economically feasible for transit operators to do that.

In addition to the environmental benefits, Mr. Darby realized significant financial savings from selling one of his cars, and found that taking the bus is less stressful than driving. Walking to and from the bus stop provides beneficial exercise as well.

Mr. Darby's environmental concerns range from regional air quality to global warming, urban sprawl, and conservation of our natural resources. Many people share those same concerns. Some just talk about them. David Darby has chosen to do something about them, and for that we salute him!



David Darby exits Bus #11 on Public Square

DEAR SANTA, PLEASE SEND ME.....

'Tis the season for wishin' and hopin' for what we'd really like to have, and our MPO members are no exception, although you won't be able to find their requests in any store! Their wish list runs the gamut from realism to fantasy, but, really, isn't there a fine line between fantasy and what George W.'s dad used to call "that vision thing"? (Where's Dana Carvey when you need him?) Anyway, here's the list. Check it twice.

Kurt Kempter would like to see a commuter rail line between Wilkes-Barre and Scranton, with stops at the Lackawanna Co. Stadium, the airport, and a spur to the First Union Arena;

Mike Lavelle's wish is two-

fold: a third lane on I-81 from the I-84 interchange to the Nanticoke exit (north and southbound), and the elimination of all left-lane exits off the interstates;

Judy Rimple must have been good this year because her list is quite long:

Bulldozers, earthmovers, rollers, graders & trucks to make trails;

Elves to work day & night so the trails will be done by 2001; (better check with the elves' union, Judy!)

Public officials to dress up and play Trail Santas; (Good luck with this one!)

Lots of rollerblades, bikes, and scooters under the trees for kids to use on the trails;

Restful places along the trails to stand and sit while enjoying the views;

Healthy food & drink shops along the trail for thirsty and hungry users;

Fitness stations that encourage exercise and outdoor activity;

Good health for all our senior citizens so they can enjoy the trails for years to come;

Adopt-A-Trail programs to help take care of these new trails;

Able-bodied volunteers to help build bridges, clean out ditches, rake leaves, plant native trees and flowers;

A well-designed Comprehensive Plan that inspires imagination, unity, teamwork, and vision!

(Continued on Page 3)

MPO DEVELOPS BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN PLAN

The Lackawanna/Luzerne Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is developing a Bicycle/Pedestrian Plan. This plan is being developed in harmony with the 1994 Statewide Bicycle/Pedestrian Plan, more commonly referred to as BicyclePA.

In addition to providing recreational opportunities for bikers and walkers, the MPO hopes that the trails/on-road network will serve as an alternative means of transportation for some commuters.

The MPO sought guidance from the Transportation Advisory Committee, many of whose members represent green-

way/environmental organizations. Based on their input, the MPO developed a network of both on-road bike routes and off-road bike trails. The trail portions of the network utilize existing and proposed trails being sponsored by a variety of greenway groups in both counties.

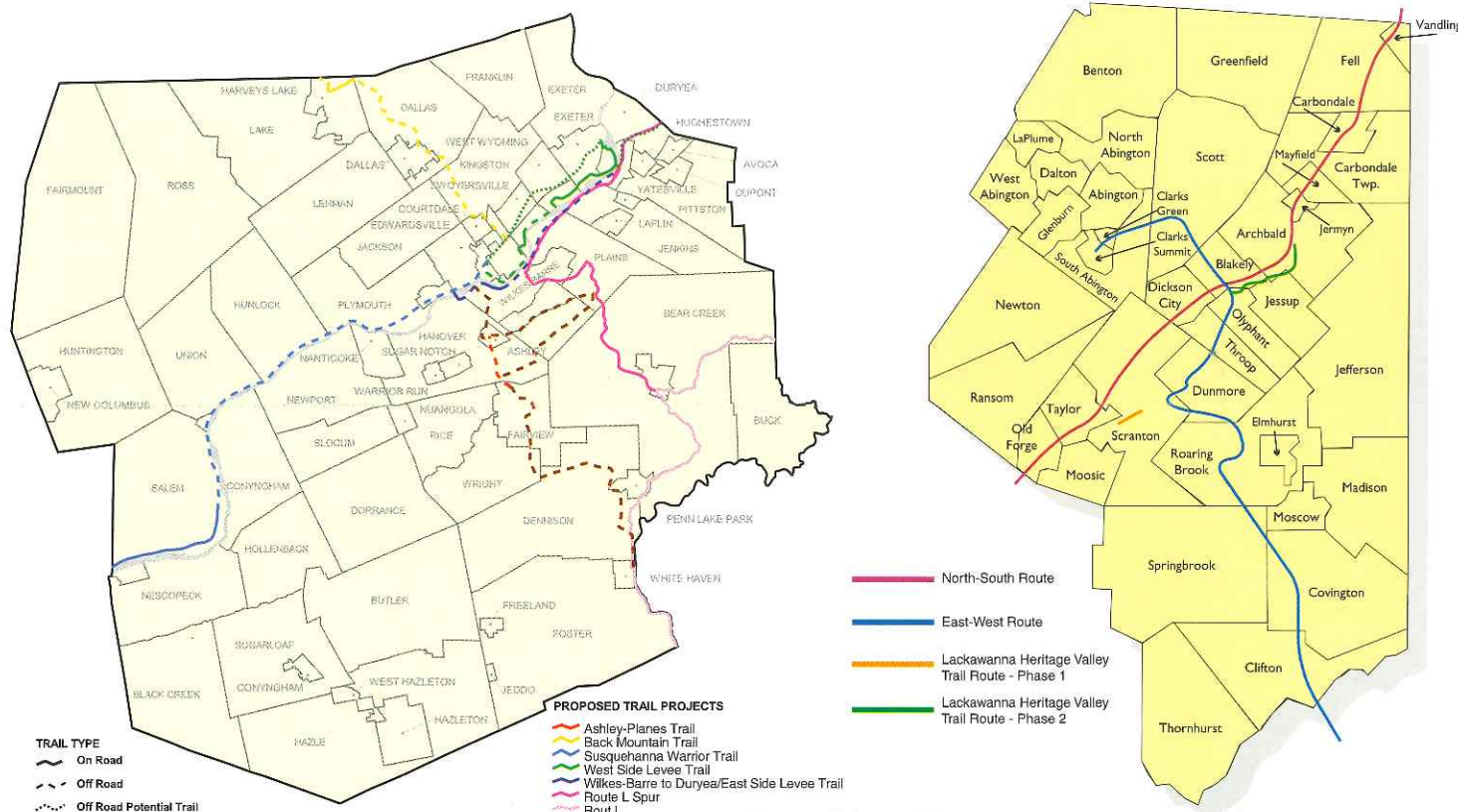
Both counties decided upon a primary north/south route that will connect around the Old Forge/ Duryea area.

In Lackawanna County, the off-road portion of the plan coincides with the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Trail. The trail portions of

the Luzerne County plan consist of several proposed or existing trail projects.

Copies of the two maps shown below have been submitted to PaDOT so that the portions of both plans that are currently not part of a proposed or existing project will eventually be funded. For example, if a project is slated for one of the roads included in the Bike Plan, the District would include shoulder widening to accommodate bicycles on that route, and/or provide signs to indicate that the road is part of a designated bicycle route.

Other routes/trails may be added to the Plan in the future.



BICYCLEPA HITS HOME

BicyclePA refers to the statewide bicycle touring promotion. Tourism is the second largest industry in Pennsylvania, and more and more of those tourists are realizing the benefits of not only seeing the sights, but hearing the sounds of Pennsylvania as well.

Several states, many of which are more mountainous than Pennsylvania, have made bicycle touring a mainstay of their tourist promotions. The Commonwealth has decided to tout its tremendous historic and scenic attractions as well as

other areas of interest to bicyclists everywhere.

BicyclePA is identifying routes that will assist tourists cross the state on direct, safe, and interesting routes.

Route L, the north/south route in eastern Pennsylvania, will enter Luzerne County along the Lehigh Gorge in the south and pass through Thornhurst, White Haven and Bear Creek. A future spur will take bikers into downtown Wilkes-Barre, then northward into Pittston and Scranton, rejoining

the primary route in Archbald. In Lackawanna County, Route L will travel near Elmhurst, the MidValley and Carbondale before passing into Susquehanna County.

The northern east/west route, Route Y, will enter the MPO area on US Route 6 from Wyoming County via Route 107 to the Lackawanna Valley. From there, the route will climb over Waymart Mountain into Wayne County.

All of the BicyclePA routes have been set; however permission from some municipalities to use local roads is pending.

".....a bulldozer, a monorail, a Pot of Gold, a litter-eating machine, a third lane, and trails, lots of trails! (Continued from Dear Santa on Page 1)

Bernie McGurl envisions the following:

West Side Carbondale: dual roadway from 7th Avenue along Lackawanna County Rail through Carbondale Yards Industrial Park to tie into PA 171 in Simpson;

Marvine Colliery access road & Lackawanna River bridge with a realignment of Main avenue near the Johnson Technical Institute (project will open up 200 acres of KOZ site in Scranton);

Expand Keyser Avenue from Scranton to Old Forge to 4 lanes, (dual carriage way using the abandoned rail corridor to create new lanes) with 2 turning lanes;

Extend Keyser Avenue from Old Forge through west side of Duryea to Coxton with new bridge over Coxton rail yard and Susquehanna River to PA 92 in W. Pittston or loop back across the Lackawanna River to Bevacio site and upgrade N. Main St. from Pittston Junction to Fort Jenkins Bridge;

Development of a "Pot of Gold" national historic site at a certain site adjacent to I-81 in Dunmore (Hmmm...does this site have a distinctive odor and haul in tons of "products" every day, Bernie?!)

Trails and greenways—just like a Visa card—everywhere you want to go!

Linda Melvin's dreaming of a day when the following will be a reality:

Electric passenger rail service from Carbondale to Scranton, Scranton to Wilkes-Barre,

Dalton to Scranton, and Dallas to Wilkes-Barre;

Bike lanes on every new and rehabbed bridge;

Sidewalks connecting every neighborhood;

Transportation educators in every school district to teach efficient trip planning, give advice on wise vehicle use and make this information part of the drivers' education manual and written test; provide incentives on ridesharing and SOV reduction;

Include criteria/ranking process for all project approvals in Long Range Plan objectives;

Give the Transportation Advisory Committee a vote on the Technical Committee and create an at-large seat for a member of the Sierra Club and a representative from a handicapped advocacy group;

Public statement from PADOT not to build any capacity-adding projects in LLTS area;

\$4 million to purchase scenic view shed along SR 247 between the proposed business park entrance at the LVIH (sic) and the entrance to Jefferson Heights;

\$6 million to purchase the Moosic Mountain Barrens and donate it to the Nature Conservancy;

A monorail connecting downtown Scranton and Montage Mountain, with shuttle service to the businesses and community on the mountain;

Full funding for the transit operators so they can provide regular van and bus service every 20 minutes from all the outlying com-

munities to downtown Wilkes-Barre and Scranton;

Bike and Pedestrian lanes and crossovers from east to west under/over the LVIH (sic).

In contrast, Bob Connolly wants just one thing:

The Laurel Line as it was in 1950! (Perhaps a time machine would do the trick, Bob!)

Tom Lawson's list has these three items:

A litter-eating machine so we could have litter-free highways (a great idea);

A grant to fund a G.I.S. mapping project for the MPO—just click and point (as Harry Lindsay would say) to find out everything you ever wanted to know about a particular site, traffic volume, % of trucks, etc.;

A magic wand that would reduce truck volumes on the interstates from 40% to 15%! (Remember to say "abracadabra," Tom!)

Jim Brozena wants to see S. River Street made more pedestrian-friendly as part of the levee-raising/River Common re-design project;

(Tom and Jim get extra credit for being the only engineers to be thinking out of the box!);

Our final submittal came from Keith Williams. Keith would like to see curb cuts on all state roads (2 inch lips off the road don't count);

A complete network of accessible recreation trails for people with disabilities;

More counties participating in the PA Rural Shared-Ride Transportation Initiative.

So, thanks to all who shared their wish lists, Hope Santa can get them on the next TIP!

Long Range Transportation Plan To Be Updated

The Long Range Transportation Plan for the Lackawanna/Luzerne Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is in the process of being updated. The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 required a 20-year plan to identify the immediate and future transportation needs in the MPO area via a comprehensive planning approach.

Originally prepared in 1994, the Plan is updated every three years. The 2000/2020 Plan represents the second update.

This update will include several G.I.S.-generated maps that will depict state routes and bridges with corresponding

traffic volumes, Crash "Hot Spots", public transit routes, rails & trails routes, the major projects listed on the 2001 Transportation Program, and vacant parcels of land that may be developed and serve as major future traffic generators.

A fold-out brochure highlighting the major points of the Plan will also be created. This will provide a more manageable and readable tool to distribute to the public. Another innovative aspect of this update will be the development of a PowerPoint presentation. Similar to the brochure, this tool will present a concise overview of the Plan in a stimulating visual format.

The project consultant is Orth-Rodgers & Associates, Inc. They prepared the original plan and the 1997 update. This update is slated to be finished by October of 2001.



Long Range Plan Committee. Seated from left to right are: Juliet Martin, Marcia Shiffman, Adrian Merolli, Harry Lindsay, Steve Pitoniak, Bill Toothill, Stephen Solon, and Nancy Snee



**LACKAWANNA/LUZERNE METROPOLITAN
PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

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**Check out PaDOT's web site
at: www.dot.state.pa.us**

Updates on Major Projects

Carey Avenue Bridge: This project was bid on December 14, 2000. It is estimated to cost \$30 million, the largest bridge project ever bid in District 4-0. The 2,395 ft. structure will feature a design-build concept in which PaDOT does the preliminary design, and the contractor does the final design. This saves 2 years in total design time and enables work to begin much earlier than it normally would. During construction, traffic will use the existing bridge, eliminating the need for detours or lane restrictions.

Sans Souci Bridge: Although the deck has been placed in Phase I, much work remains to be done. Two flooding incidents, revisions to the sewer design, and utility delays have adversely affected the progress on this \$4 million project.

Route 11, South Abington Township: Originally scheduled to be done in November, this widening and signal improvement project has experienced

some delays due to water line and gas main problems.

Keyser Avenue: Work will begin in the spring of 2001 to widen Keyser Avenue to 6 lanes at its junction with the Morgan Highway and the Scranton Expressway. Mile-long traffic back-ups are common here due to the railroad overpass, built in 1908, which limits the road to two lanes. A new railroad bridge will be constructed and the road will be widened to 6 lanes.



Work progresses on Sans Souci Bridge

The 2-year construction phase will pose many challenges due to the nearly 30,000 vehicles that travel this road every day, along with the 14 freight trains that travel on the Canadian Pacific Railway Bridge over the road. A cast-in-the-box culvert that runs diagonally beneath the railroad structure, and the 12-inch diameter, high-pressure gas main at the same location will also complicate matters. PaDOT asks that drivers be patient while this \$8 million project is underway. The results will be worth it!

Stafford Avenue Bridge: This \$2 million highway/rail bridge project went from the conceptual stage to final design and project delivery in only 4 months time. Construction of the new bridge and the reactivation of the Laurel Line will assure continued operations for a local plastics industry. The local tourist industry will also benefit via trolley excursions linking downtown hotels, Steamtown, and the Visitors Center.