

Spring

2012



LACKAWANNA / LUZERNE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

CONNECTIONS

Lackawanna River Heritage Trail Expansion

On May 14th, the Lackawanna Heritage Valley National and State Heritage Area (LHV) broke ground on the newest section of the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail. The new 2-mile section of trail is being configured out of an abandoned rail bed that runs from West Elm Street in Scranton to Keyser Creek in Taylor Borough.

The \$2 million project will extend the multi-purpose trail that runs from Olive Street to West Elm Street in Scranton. When completed, the new trail section will create an 8-mile contiguous pedestrian and bicycle path from Market Street in Scranton to Taylor Borough. It will be the first trail in the region to have a dual pathway - a 10-foot wide paved path adjacent to a 6-foot wide packed-stone dust path.

The paved portion of the trail is suitable for bicyclists, families with strollers, and wheelchair users. The stone dust pathway offers a comfortable surface for walkers, runners, and dog walkers. The trail will also feature several scenic overlooks of the Lackawanna River. Access to the trail will be improved due to the con-

struction of a pedestrian island on West Elm Street which will help trail users safely cross the busy roadway.

According to LHV Executive Director Natalie Gelb, "The Scranton to Taylor section is a key element in the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail System. It helps the Lackawanna Heritage Valley address its goal of connecting people and communities to the Lackawanna River."

Construction is anticipated to be completed by late fall of this year.

Several state and local officials spoke at the groundbreaking, including DCNR Secretary Richard J. Allan, Senator John Blake, Representative Sid Kavulich, Lackawanna County Commission-

ers Jim Wansacz, Corey O'Brien, and Patrick O'Malley. Also present were Robert Savakinus, Board Chair of LHV and Natalie Gelb, LHV Executive Director.

The officials pointed out the many benefits of the trail noting that it provides a safe venue for both recreational and fitness activities, offers a safe alternative route for students and commuters, and creates long-term economic benefits to the local communities through which it passes.

For more information on the trail project, contact April Rogato, LHV Executive Assistant at 963-6730, exten-



Government officials and community leaders break ground on the new LVH

2013 Transportation Improvement Program Out for Public Comment

The draft 2013-2016 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is out for public comment until July 3rd.

The TIP contains the list of Highway/Bridge and Transit projects for which federal and/or state transportation funds have been designated. It represents the first four years of the Twelve Year Program and the 2011-2035 Long Range Transportation Plan. It is updated

every two years.

Due to the emphasis on maintaining roads and bridges, there are not many new projects on the 2013 TIP. Those that have been added relate to roadway restoration or bridge rehabilitation/replacement.

The MPO must allocate 90% of the federal and state funds it receives toward asset management projects, and only 10% toward new construction pro-

jects.

Information regarding TIP amendment procedures, air quality analysis, and memorandums explaining the purpose of the TIP is included in the TIP packets that are available for review at the following locations:

Luzerne County Planning Commission; Lackawanna County Regional Planning (continued on page 3)

Two Municipalities Request New Bus Routes

Shickshinny Borough in Luzerne County has never been serviced by the Luzerne County Transportation Authority (LCTA) buses. Located about 18 miles south of the Greater Wilkes-Barre Urbanized Area, the borough lies outside the normal service area.

Shickshinny Borough officials contacted the LCTA about a year ago to discuss whether bus service was feasible for their municipality. After studying the situation, Stan Strelish, LCTA Executive Director, and the Authority Board agreed to initiate service to the borough, noting that 18 riders per run would be necessary to make the service economically viable.

As of June 11th, buses will run to Shickshinny on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings. The bus will leave the James F.



Senior Housing Center on Vine St. is Pick-Up Site in Shickshinny Borough

Conahan Intermodal Center in downtown Wilkes-Barre at 8:20 AM, stop in Glen Lyon at 9:00 AM and arrive in Shickshinny at 9:15 AM. After returning to the intermodal center, the bus will make stops at Wal-Mart, the Wyoming Valley

Mall, and Mohegan Sun Casino.

The return trip to Shickshinny will depart at 3:05 PM from the intermodal center.

According to Stan Strelish, "The Authority will look at the ridership numbers in about eight weeks to determine whether to continue service."

After having had no bus service for about 20 years, Laflin Borough officials recently approached the LCTA about resuming service to the borough. After studying the situation, the LCTA decided to initiate trips to Laflin as part of the existing Route 17 which runs from the intermodal center to the Wyoming Valley Mall, Mohegan Sun Casino, Pittston, and Avoca. No arrival/departure times have been set yet, but the bus will leave Laflin four times a day.

ADA Curb Cuts Mandated for Paving Projects

Keith Williams, Community Organizer for the Northeastern Pennsylvania Center for Independent Living (NEPACIL), is calling on municipalities to remember that proper curb cuts must be made on all streets that are to be paved this summer.

The Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 requires that curb cuts be installed when paving through intersections, even if there are no plans to replace sidewalk corners. This mandate stems from

a court case in the early 1990s which determined that resurfacing municipal streets constitutes an "alteration" according to the ADA language.

As a result, municipalities were ordered to install curb cuts on those portions of streets when resurfacing took place, including retroactive requirements for those streets that have been resurfaced since January 26, 1992, the date the ADA became effective.

"Curb cuts are integral to the independence

of people with disabilities", Mr. Williams said. He continued, "We are seeing more accessible businesses throughout the community, but a significant portion of our population cannot patronize them without proper access to sidewalks. Removing the barriers to sidewalk access will enable the disabled to participate in all aspects of community life already enjoyed by the general public."

Steamtown Receives Archival Collection from Syracuse U.

Steamtown National Historic Site in Scranton has received a significant archival collection from Syracuse University. The archives contain information and data on the Delaware Lackawanna & Western, the Erie and Lackawanna, and the Wyoming Valley Railroads all of which served the Scranton area.

Steamtown Park Historian and Archivist, Patrick McKnight stated, "This addition

will almost double the archival collection at Steamtown. We already had a good collection of regional railroad archives. Now we have a great collection. I hope we can continue to build on the good work Syracuse has done with the collection."

Park Superintendent, Kip Hagen, said, "This acquisition will be a research tool for our region. I am sure our local partners in preservation, institutions of higher

learning, rail historians and the general public will find these documents of particular interest."

Located in downtown Scranton, Steamtown National Historic Site is open daily from 9 am - 5 pm. The full 2012 excursion schedule is available for review and printing at www.nps.gov/stea. Additional general park information is available by phoning 570-340-5200.

MPO Reaches Out to Hispanic Community

Adrian Merolli, Executive Director of the Luzerne County Planning Commission, and Nancy Snee, MPO Coordinator for Luzerne County, recently met with Amilcar Arroyo, an activist in the Hispanic community in the Greater Hazleton Area.

Mr. Arroyo is President of C&A Promotions and Vice President of the Hazleton Integration Project.

The mission of the Hazleton Integration Project (HIP) is to “find a suitable location within the community to establish a community center where economically disadvantaged children can participate in a variety of free or affordable educational, cultural, or athletic activities.” Florida Marlins Coach, Joe Maddon (a Hazleton native) was instrumental in establishing the HIP.

When asked about how the MPO staff could reach out to the community re-

garding transportation planning, Mr. Arroyo stated that there are a few options. First, advertising the location of plans and documents to be reviewed in the local Spanish newspaper, *Molinegocio\$USA*, would be the first step.



Adrian Merolli and Amilcar Arroyo following June 7th Meeting

He also mentioned giving a presentation to an organization called Concerned Parents of the Hazleton Area which is an advocacy group “dedicated to providing pathways for success through educational access and inclusiveness for students and families...for whom language is a barrier.”

Mr. Arroyo offered to translate advertisements or flyers that could be posted or handed out at upcoming community festivals.

Mr. Merolli asked Mr. Arroyo whether it would be possible for him to serve on the MPO’s Transportation Advisory Committee. Mr. Arroyo said that he will consider it and/or ask another person to serve in his stead.

The MPO staff found the meeting to be very productive, and will investigate all of the options discussed in the near future.

Coal Street Project Improves Wilkes-Barre Blvd. Access

The \$11.7 million Coal Street widening project seems to be on track for completion this summer. The project has transformed a heavily-traveled, 2-lane street into a five-lane gateway entrance into Wilkes-Barre City.

In addition to widening the roadway, the alignment has changed so that the access onto Wilkes-Barre Boulevard now lines up with Union Street. The original plan called for an extension of Coal Street to Union Street, but this phase of the project has been tabled due to lack of adequate funding, and the emphasis on asset management over new roadway con-

struction projects.

The new Wilkes-Barre Boulevard access point consists of 4 lanes - one eastbound lane, two left-turn westbound lanes and one right-turn westbound lane. The new configuration has improved visibility and, thus, safety at this busy intersection.

The signals at the prior access location have been removed, but traffic will be allowed to enter and exit Coal St. using right turns only.



New Coal St. Access Point onto Wilkes-Barre Blvd.

2013-2016 TIP Out For Public Comment (continued from Page 1)

Commission; PennDOT District 4-0; office of Amilcar Arroyo, 100 W. Broad St., Hazleton; NAACP in care of Ron Felton, Wilkes-Barre Chapter President; and in the Reference Departments of the following libraries: Osterhout Free Library, Greater Hazleton Public Library, the Scranton Public Library, and the Carbondale Public Library.

The information is also available on-line at the following link:

http://www.luzernecounty.org/county/departments_agencies/planning_commission/lackawannaluzerne-metropolitan-planning-organization.

A public meeting on the TIP will be held on July 11th at 10:00 AM in Conference Room 233 at the PennDOT District 4-0 Building in Dunmore. If people cannot come to the meeting, they can submit comments via the comment sheets included with each packet, or they can contact Nancy Snee at 825-1564 regarding

Luzerne County projects, or Steve Pitoniak at 963-6400 regarding Lackawanna County projects.

The MPO Technical Committee will meet following the public meeting on July 11th to review and recommend approval of the 2013 TIP, contingent on any pertinent comments received during the public comment period.

The Coordinating Committee will meet on July 18 to approve the 2013 TIP.



**LACKAWANNA/LUZERNE METROPOLITAN
PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

Published By: Luzerne County Planning
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Contact: Nancy Snee

Telephone: 825-1564

E-Mail: nancy.snee@luzernecounty.org

MPO Web Page Link:

[http://www.luzernecounty.org/county/
departments_agencies/
planning_commission/lackawannaluzerne-
metropolitan-planning-organization](http://www.luzernecounty.org/county/departments_agencies/planning_commission/lackawannaluzerne-metropolitan-planning-organization)

***PennDOT District 4-0 Web Site:
www.neparoads.com***



Steamtown National Historic Site to Host RailCamp

The National Railway Historical Society (NRHS), in partnership with the National Park Service at Steamtown National Historic Site, will conduct RailCamp 2012 from July 8 - 13.

RailCamp began in 1998 as a pilot project to give high school students an opportunity to learn about the world of railroading, and to share ideas and interest with students from across the United States.

RailCampers selected for the 2012 program will receive an introduction to the principles of historic preservation, gain first-hand experience in railroad operations, and explore a variety of career opportunities in transportation-related fields.

In addition to learning about a wide variety of rail-related subjects during their stay in Northeastern Pennsylvania, the students also have the opportu-

nity to visit Amtrak facilities in Philadelphia and Bear, Delaware as well as the Canadian Pacific Railway Yards in Binghamton, NY.



2011 RailCampers receive a safety briefing from machinist, John Bibalo, before entering the welding booth.

Camp counselors are recruited from the 13,000-plus membership of the NRHS. The counselors are available 24 hours a day to serve as instructors and mentors for the campers. They, along with National Park Rangers and volunteers, help make the camp a fulfilling and rewarding experience.

Students or organizations can contact any chapter of the NRHS to receive registration information or fill out an application online at the following web site:

[http://railcamp.com/program/
railcamp](http://railcamp.com/program/railcamp).

Located in downtown Scranton, Steamtown National Historic Site is open from 9:00am - 5:00pm.

Information provided by Mark Brennan, Chief, Interpreter, Visitor Services & Public Affairs National Park Service, Steamtown NHS.