

ALL ABOARD! TROLLEY TO RUN AGAIN IN SCRANTON

Recognizing the important role tourism plays in economic development, the Lackawanna County Commissioners initiated a plan in 1997 to build a trolley museum. The museum will recall the establishment of the first electric streetcar system in the United States, explain the history of trolleys and interurban vehicles in Scranton and Lackawanna County, and relate that history to the development of various cities and boroughs located along the route. The Commissioners' plan also calls for facilities to house the trolleys which have been donated to the county by the East Penn Valley Traction Association (EPVT) and the Buckingham Valley Trolley Association (BVTA). The EPVT and BVTA have since merged to form the Electric City Trolley Museum Association. The final piece of the plan calls for

a trolley excursion along the route of the former Lackawanna and Wyoming Valley Railroad (the Laurel Line).

The initial phase of the trolley excursion will travel from the Trolley Museum along the Brady Lead to just short of the bridge over Roaring Brook. The second phase of the excursion will take the trolley across the brook and through the Scranton Tunnel, the longest interurban railroad tunnel in the United States at 4,747 feet. The terminus will be at the Lackawanna County Visitor's Center located on Montage Mountain Road, bringing the length of the excursion to 6.5 miles. The trips will be made aboard two Brill cars—car #76

which was constructed in 1925, and car #80, which was constructed in 1932. Both vehicles were operated by the BVTA along Penn's Landing in Philadelphia for many years. Electrification of the first 1.3 miles of the line was completed in the spring of 2000. It is expected that electrification of the entire line will be complete by late 2001 once the Stafford Avenue Bridge has been replaced.



Car #80 will be used for trolley excursions.

2001 TWELVE YEAR PROGRAM ADOPTED

The State Transportation Committee (STC) adopted the 2001 Twelve Year Program (TYP) on August 11, 2000 during its quarterly meeting in State College. The TYP, which is updated every two years, provides for a \$36.7 billion investment in the Commonwealth's highways and bridges, transit, aviation, rail freight and intermodal facilities, and takes advantage of all federal, state, local and private funds available for transportation improvements.

The 2001 TYP is the second

to be developed through Pennsylvania's "re-engineered" planning and programming process. The STC, PennDOT, the 14 Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), and the six Local Development Districts (LDDs) worked together to gather input, set procedural and financial guidelines and develop the Program. The STC gathered input from the public at statewide hearings last fall and at regional public meetings held in the spring and summer.

Transportation Secretary Bradley Mallory said of the process,

"I applaud the commission members and our local partners for their leadership and support of this very open process. The result is a solid program built with the help of the public and our planning partners."

The Transportation Improvement Program, which comprises the first four years of the TYP, contains \$8.4 billion for highway and bridge projects. \$260 million of that total is targeted for projects in Luzerne and Lackawanna Counties.

Major Projects Ready For Bid in Next Quarter:

Carey Avenue Bridge Replacement- Estimated Cost: \$30 million +

Davis Street Interchange Improvement- Estimated Cost: \$18 million

Keyser Avenue Railroad Bridge at the Morgan Highway- Estimated Cost: \$7 million

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Getting the public involved in the transportation planning process has been a priority for federal, state, and local officials since the passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act in 1991 and its successor, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century.

In the Lackawanna/Luzerne Transportation Study (LLTS) Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), public involvement occurs on both a formal and an informal basis.

Formal MPO Actions

On a formal basis, the LLTS MPO informs and seeks input from the public in a variety of ways. In 1994, the MPO formed a Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) to aid in the preparation of the Long-Range Plan.

The TAC met with the consultant throughout the process and proved to be a valuable source of information and suggestions. The MPO revived the TAC in 1996 to act in a permanent advisory capacity to the MPO Technical Committee. They meet about four times a year to provide input to the MPO on all important transportation matters.

The TAC most recently reviewed the draft 2001-2004 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). One of the recommendations the TAC made regarding the TIP was that it would be helpful for reviewing purposes to have a brief narrative description of the projects rather than just a listing of the projects.

In 1999, the MPO began publication of this newsletter, *Connections*, as another tool to explain the transportation planning process in a concise, understandable manner and to keep the public up-to-date on the progress being made on major transportation projects.

Before adopting any major transportation document, such as the Long-Range Plan, the Twelve-Year Program, or the TIP, the MPO puts these documents out for public display for 35 days. The documents are usually placed in the two county planning commission offices, at the PaDOT 4-0 office, and at the public libraries in Scranton, Wilkes-Barre, and Hazleton. However, as part of the required environmental justice regulations, the MPO expanded this list to over 30 locations when the draft TIP

recently went on public display.

At the end of the public comment period, a public hearing is held at which citizens can present oral testimony. All written testimony submitted to the MPO throughout the public comment period is also recorded at this hearing. Eleven citizens attended the August 31, 2000 public hearing on the TIP and several people submitted their comments in writing. Many of their concerns had already been addressed by the MPO via projects on the current or proposed TIP. The MPO provided direction as to how the other concerns raised at the meeting could be addressed.

Traditionally, the State Transportation Committee (STC) holds public hearings every two years on the Twelve-Year Program, a state-mandated long-range transportation program. Although oral testimony is limited to 5-minute presentations, the STC encourages the public to submit written testimony in which more detailed comments can be made.

Informal MPO Actions

Informally, people contact the MPO often to discuss transportation problems that affect them or their community directly. Depending on the problem at hand, the MPO advises these people on the steps they should take to secure funding for the project via placement on the TIP.

The push by residents of Bear Creek Boulevard, Plains Township, Luzerne County, to get their road repaired/rehabilitated serves as an excellent example of grass roots public involvement. About two years ago, the residents appealed to the Plains Township Commissioners to repair the deplorable conditions of Bear Creek Boulevard.

The Township Commissioners concluded that the Township did not have the necessary funds to fix the problem, so they asked the Luzerne County Commissioners and Planning Commission for financial help. Township officials and residents wrote letters, made phone calls, and attended a planning commission meeting to stress the importance of receiving financial help.

Because the project had both municipal and county support, the Luzerne County Planning Commission placed the project on its Highway/Bridge Priority List. The next step would be to get the project on the TIP. However, a project has to be eligible to receive federal funds before it can be placed on the TIP.

Bear Creek Boulevard was not because it was not part of the Federal-Aid System.

The MPO assisted the municipality in applying to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for federal-aid status by collecting traffic counts and other data, as well as speaking with FHWA officials on behalf of the project. Fortunately, Bear Creek Boulevard met the criteria for federal-aid status and became eligible to receive federal funds. With this roadblock now removed, the MPO placed the project on the TIP.

Thus, through the cooperative efforts of the MPO and the residents and officials of Plains Township, Bear Creek Boulevard will get the repairs it needs.

This example demonstrates very clearly how effective citizen involvement can be in the transportation planning process.

The LLTS MPO views citizen input as a vital part of transportation planning and encourages interested persons to contact the MPO at any time with questions and concerns.

How To Contact the MPO

Planners from the Luzerne and Lackawanna County Planning Commissions serve as the MPO staff. Questions or concerns can be directed to:

Luzerne County:

Adrian Merolli, MPO Secretary, or Nancy Snee, MPO Coordinator, at 825-1560

Lackawanna County:

Harry Lindsay MPO Vice-Chair, or Steve Pitoniak, Technical Committee Vice-Chair, at 963-6400

PennDOT District 4-0:

Dave Krisanda, PaDOT District 4-0 Public Relations Director, at 963-4014.

REGIONAL SUPPORT FOR AIRPORT IMPROVEMENTS

The County Commissioners of ten counties in Northeastern Pennsylvania have united to petition Governor Tom Ridge to release \$15 million from the State's Capital Budget to help fund major improvements to the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport.

The fifth largest of its kind in the state, the airport has had its airport layout plan approved by the Federal Aviation Administration and by the Department of Transportation Bureau of Aviation. The improvement plan calls for the construction of a new terminal, a parking garage, a surface vehicle parking lot, circulation roadways, and an aircraft parking apron which will be located adjacent to the new terminal. Studies done over the last ten years have

concluded that the existing 42-year old terminal is not large enough to accommodate projected passenger volumes and is unable to provide efficient and effective air service to the region's users.

The design of the terminal is approxi-



A sketch of the proposed new terminal building

mately 50 percent complete and construction of all facilities is scheduled to begin in May, 2001. However, without the Commonwealth's commitment to release the \$15 million prior to September 1, the May 2001 construction start will be in jeopardy. The total construction cost of the project is approximately \$57 million. Adding the financing cost to the project brings the total cost to \$65 million.

The Bi-County Board of County Commissioners from Luzerne and Lackawanna Counties oversee the operation of the airport. Recognizing the importance of the airport to the region, the County Commissioners from Wayne, Pike, Susquehanna, Wyoming, Schuylkill, Columbia, Carbon, and Monroe Counties co-signed the letter to Governor Ridge.

WYOMING VALLEY AIRPORT ACTION PLAN UPDATE

The Airport Action Plan for the Wyoming Valley Airport, located in Forty-Fort Borough, is being updated in conjunction with the Twelve Year Program update and the Twelve Year Capital Airport Improvement Program. The purpose of the plan is to review the airport's operations, needs and relevant safety requirements.

Based on these findings, projects will be developed to address existing shortcomings and to provide a safe, attractive, and state-of-the-art transportation facility.

Jim Brozena, Luzerne County Engineer, and Emil Jarolen, Project Manager, Pasonick En-

gineering, are overseeing the project. To assist in the plan update, the county formed a Technical/Citizen Advisory Committee.

Once the Committee agrees on proposed improvements, these projects will be placed on PaDOT's Twelve-Year Program—the document which assigns federal and state funding to projects.

Sixty-one aircraft are currently stored at the airport, 38 in T-hangars and 10 in the main hangar. The remainder are stored on outside tie-down areas.

Among the improvements being considered are construction of two new taxiways—the first from the main ramp area to the threshold of runway 7, and a parallel taxiway to the threshold of runway 25. This will eliminate the existing configuration that requires aircraft to back-taxi on the active runway thresholds for departure.

The possible extension of the primary runway, Runway 7/25, will also be studied. Additional parking, hangar development, and ramp space for transient aircraft are other needs that are being considered.

PADOT PLANNING DIRECTORS TO MEET IN SCRANTON

Approximately eight years ago, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation began holding annual meetings between PaDOT staff and its Planning Partners across the state.

These annual meeting have evolved from a once-a-year event to a Fall and Spring event.

The Radisson at the Lackawanna Station Hotel will be the setting for the Fall Planning Partners Meeting October 31 through November 2. The Lackawanna County Regional

Planning Commission staff has been working closely with the PaDOT Planning and Programming staff to arrange the meeting and other activities.

The meetings will open with a reception at the Station on Monday night. On Tuesday, the group will hold meetings and do field views of the Lackawanna County Coal Mine, the Trolley Museum, and various sites along the Governor Robert P. Casey Highway.

On Tuesday evening, the group will tour the

Steamtown National Historic Site. The conference will conclude with additional meetings and workshops on Wednesday.

Representatives from the 14 Metropolitan Planning Organizations, 6 Local Development Districts, PaDOT Central and District offices, Federal Highway Administration, and the Federal Transit Administration are expected to attend this meeting.

**LACKAWANNA/LUZERNE
TRANSPORTATION STUDY
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

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**Check out PennDOT's web
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www.dot.state.pa.us**

NOTICE TO PROCEED GIVEN ON HIGHLAND PARK BOULEVARD/MUNDY STREET CONNECTION

PaDOT recently gave American Asphalt notice to proceed on the Highland Park Boulevard/Mundy Street portion of the I-81 Exit 46 project.

This project will complete access to the First Union Arena at Casey Plaza and provide direct access from I-81 to Mundy Street, and all the commercial establishments located there, including the Wyoming Valley Mall and the Arena Hub.

As part of the project, Highland Park Boulevard (SR 2063) will be widened to 5 lanes from Business Route 309 to the area near the Arena. A new section of Highland Park Boulevard will be built to extend the roadway to Mundy Street.

Mundy Street will be widened to 5 lanes from the new junction with Highland Park Boulevard to PA Route 315, at a point north of the Wyoming Valley Mall.

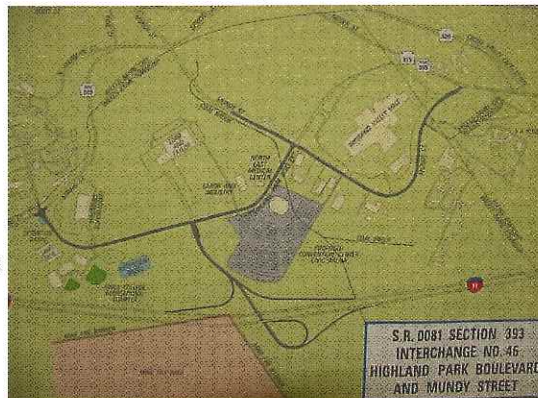
The project also includes upgrades of existing traffic signals at Highland Park Boulevard and Business Route 309, Mundy Street at the Arena Hub, and Mundy Street at Route 315 (Kidder Street). New signals will be installed along Highland Park Boulevard at Wegman's, Sunshine Drive (site of proposed new development located between Wegman's and Exit 46), at the Exit 46 access,

and at the new junction with Mundy Street

New signals will also be installed along Mundy Street at Bear Creek Boulevard and at the Wyoming Valley Mall entrance near Kidder Street.

Other improvements involved in the project include a box culvert type bridge (large, square concrete pipe), highway lighting, drainage, guide rail, and pavement markings.

The construction work will be concentrated in the area of Highland Park Boulevard between the Exit 46 ramps and the First Union Arena. This phase is estimated to be completed by Thanksgiving. Over the next several weeks crews are expected to begin fill work on a mound of dirt in the area of Highland Park Boulevard. The 2.2 mile project will cost approximately \$10.9 million, 80% federal funds and 20% local share.



Design of Highland Park Boulevard/Mundy Street Connection