

Spring

2002



LACKAWANNA/LUZERNE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

CONNECTIONS

42 New and Continuing Projects Slated By District 4

PENNDOT plans to begin work on 35 new transportation projects in Luzerne and Lackawanna Counties, and continue work on 7 major projects.

These projects are all part of PENNDOT's on-going mission to provide a swifter, safer, and smoother transportation system in the 2-county area.

The new projects slated to begin in Lackawanna County include bridge repair projects, bridge replacement projects, paving projects along 14 miles of state roads, safety improvement projects, intersection improvement projects, railroad crossing improvement projects, traffic signal improvement projects, corridor improvement projects, enhancement projects, and a series of I-81 projects

including paving, guide rail, concrete barrier work along rock cuts, and the installation of reflective pavement markings.

Work will continue on the \$20.2 million Davis Street/Montage Mountain Road project at Exit 182 along I-81, as well as on the \$7.6 million Keyser Avenue Project, and the \$317,000 safety improvement project at the intersection of Gino Merli Drive, Main Street, and Hospital Street in Peckville.

The 16 new projects in Luzerne County include the \$6.4 million corridor improvement project along 1.8 miles of PA Route 315 from Plains Township to Laflin Borough. This section of the highway will be widened to 5 lanes. Roadway and drainage improvements along this

stretch will also be made. Other components of the project include replacement of the bridge over Laurel Run Creek near the Woodlands Inn, installation of new traffic signals at all existing intersections, and pavement markings.

Work will continue on the \$27.5 million Carey Avenue Bridge Replacement project, the \$10.9 million Highland Park Boulevard/Mundy Street connection project, the \$504,000 Mill Street Bridge Replacement over Laurel Run Creek in Wilkes-Barre City, and the \$435,000 Broad Street/Diamond Avenue intersection improvement project in the City of Hazleton and the Borough of West Hazleton.

For a detailed listing of the new and continuing projects, contact Dave Krisanda, PENNDOT, at 963-4044.

Interest in Enhancement Program Still Thriving in Two-County Area

Continuing interest in the development of recreational trails and historic restoration of buildings and railroad-related structures and rail cars accounted for the large number of enhancement funding applications received by Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties in the 2001 round.

Every two years, applicants make submissions to the Lackawanna/Luzerne Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to receive funds set aside for enhancement projects by the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). The MPO received 23 applications by October 26, 2001.

On January 9, 2002, the

Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) of the MPO reviewed and ranked these 23 applications—11 from Lackawanna County and 12 from Luzerne County—according to the criteria established by the state. Among the criteria were: the relationship of the project to an area transportation network, whether the project promotes or preserves the transportation heritage of the area, the amount of federal funding requested versus the local share being contributed, and whether the project is ready to go.

The funding requested by the 23 applicants totaled \$4.7 million for the Luzerne County projects and \$3.1 mil-

lion for the Lackawanna County projects. The amount of available funds, as allocated to the region by a set formula, was \$732,000 per county, creating a shortfall of \$2.2 million in Luzerne County and \$1.5 million in Lackawanna County.

As in the 1999 round, the MPO decided to cover this shortfall by supplementing the enhancement funding with Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) funds in order to fund Phase I of all the submitted projects.

This recommendation was brought before the MPO Technical Committee on February 20, 2002 where it passed unanimously, and then went to (continued on page 3)

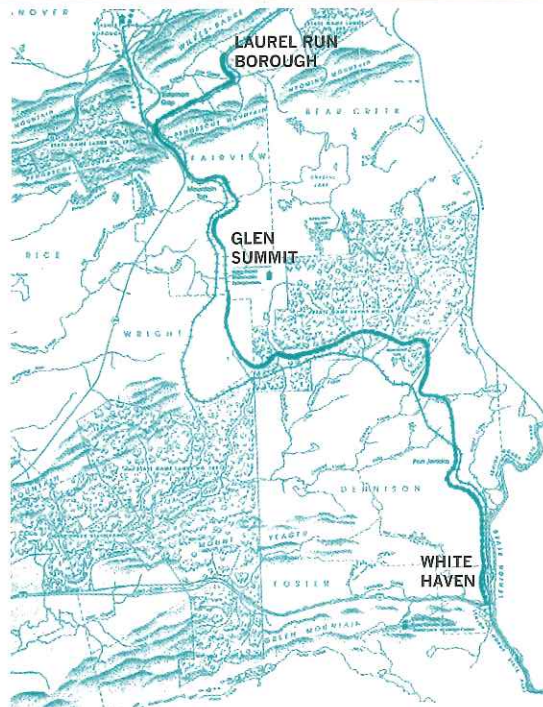
Anthracite Scenic Trails Association to Develop New Trail

The Anthracite Scenic Trails Association (ASTA) recently accepted the Deed of Easement on a 15.5 mile trail between White Haven Borough and Laurel Run Borough. ASTA acquired ownership of this trail from the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor (D&L) in December, 2001. This segment is part of a 150-mile trail that will eventually extend from Bristol to Wilkes-Barre. ASTA will develop the local link in conjunction with the D&L and the Wildlands Conservancy.

The new trail will pass through White Haven Borough, Dennison Township, Wright Township, Fairview Township, Hanover Township, Game Lands 199, and the Seven Tubs Area in Plains Township. The trail will end at the starting line of the Giants' Despair Hill Climb in Laurel Run Borough.

Acquisition of the trail from White Haven to Laurel Run has been accomplished via a state grant. However, there is still a half mile section in Glen Summit that is still being negotiated as well as the section from the Tubs to Northampton Street in Laurel Run Borough.

The trail area is blessed with abundant



Map of the proposed White Haven to Laurel Run Trail

water resources that include the Lehigh River, the Little Nescopeck Creek, Wapwallopen Creek, Creasy and Pine Creeks as well as several ponds and wetlands, all of which

support a variety of fish, reptiles and amphibians. The forested areas and wetlands support a variety of birds and wildlife which accounts for its designation as part of the Atlantic Flyway, one of the four major waterfowl migratory routes in the country.

Outdoor enthusiasts will enjoy the recreational opportunities that this new trail will offer such as kayaking, canoeing, and white-water rafting on the Lehigh River, as well as bird-watching, hunting, fishing, and hiking along the trail.

Plans for this trail were originally proposed in 1991 when Luzerne County applied for technical assistance from the National Park Service. The original plans called for connecting the 30 miles between the Lehigh River and the Susquehanna River from White Haven to Wilkes-Barre. The current plan does not call for a connection to Wilkes-Barre at this time.

Construction on the first link of the trail from White Haven to Glen Summit is expected to get underway in 2004.

In My Opinion: "Aussie Rules" Traffic Controls by Nancy Snee

How many times have you sat at a red light for what seemed like an eternity and not a single vehicle crossed your path? There are several intersections where this happens to me on a regular basis.

On a recent trip to Australia, I was intrigued at the lack of traffic signals and stop signs throughout the town of Sunbury where I stayed. In lieu of signalized intersections, the Aussies have opted for roundabouts (traffic circles to us). They drive on the left side of the road and as they approach the roundabout, they "give way" to the driver on the right. This system works beautifully! It keeps traffic moving and there's no vying or competing because everyone obeys that rule. Imagine that!

So, instead of having to stop at every single intersection because of a red light or a stop sign, especially when there are no other

vehicles in sight, traffic flows on. Besides saving time for motorists, this method has got to be more efficient in terms of air quality since it drastically reduces the time spent idling.

The "give way" to the driver on the right rule also applies at T-intersections where I was surprised to see no stop signs. Drivers slow down, check for traffic on their right and left, and then continue on their merry way—kind of like our rolling stop, only it's legal.

Aussies are much more liberal about U-Turns than we Americans. They pull "U-ies" all the time. They also have a unique way of making turns at signalized intersections against opposing traffic (yes, there are traffic signals where warranted). They pull to the extreme left or right, depending on which direction they're turning, wait until

all opposing traffic has cleared, and then make the turn. By pulling off to the extreme right or left, they allow the traffic behind them to proceed unimpeded while the driver who wants to turn across traffic sits out of the way until an opportunity to turn presents itself.

There are no "Yield" signs in Australia. Rather, their signs say, "Give Way", which you have to admit is much more direct. "Give Way" seems more like an order than our apparently incomprehensible, "Yield".

Aussie drivers are less prone to get worked up over traffic than we Americans. I witnessed very few signs of road rage or aggressive driving other than a few beeps of the horn at a traffic light. They're much more likely to give you the benefit of the doubt, wish you a "G'Day", and invite you to tea.

Sounds jolly good to me, mate!

Speed in Work Zones Still A Problem

The sign reads, "Work Area Speed Limit 45 mph", but a new PENNDOT safety study indicates that most drivers are disregarding the sign. In the work zone around the Davis Street/Montage Mountain Road reconstruction project, 97% of all drivers exceed the 45 mph speed limit more than 90% of the time.

PENNDOT safety experts conducted the study on I-81 northbound near Exit 182 (old exit 51) January 10-16, 2002 at various times throughout the day. They found that the typical speed of 85% of the drivers was 63 mph, almost 20 mph faster than the posted speed limit.

Speed in construction zones has been blamed for the deaths and injuries of several PENNDOT workers in recent years. District 4-0 recently held a memorial ceremony to remember the 23

people who lost their lives needlessly in work zones throughout Pennsylvania in 2000. Among those who attended the memorial entitled "Gone But Not Forgotten" was the family of District 4-0 employee Richard Bradley who was killed in a work zone crash on May 14, 2001. Pe-



The work zone along I-81 at the Davis St./Montage Mountain Road Exit

ter Kisatsky, another District 4-0 employee who was seriously injured in January, 2002 while picking up litter in a work zone, also attended.

Dave Skrocki, Assistant District 4-0 Engineer, reminded the attendees that these slain PENNDOT workers were mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters to their families who loved and needed them.

As a result of the safety study done at the Davis Street/Montage Mountain Road work zone, State Police are announcing a crackdown on speeders. According to Captain Joseph Marut, "The safety of construction workers and drivers is our primary concern. This speed crackdown is designed to let the traveling public know that the State Police and PENNDOT are serious about work zone safety and violations will not be tolerated".

Historic Designation Delaying Progress on Three Area Projects

Historic preservation issues have halted preliminary design work on three projects in Luzerne County.

The Coal Street and Martin Luther King (MLK) Boulevard projects in the City of Wilkes-Barre and an intersection improvement project along Route 239 in Mocanaqua are being delayed until this issue can be resolved to the satisfaction of PENNDOT, the Federal Highway Administration and the Pennsylvania Historic & Museum Commission.

In the case of the Coal Street project, the historic designation of the entire Lehigh Valley Railroad corridor from Allentown

to Wilkes-Barre is the stumbling block. The corridor is more than 50 years old and was an important local and regional rail hub. A similar designation for the Pennsylvania Railroad corridor is affecting the MLK Boulevard project.

For the Route 239 project, an historic designation of the entire village of Mocanaqua is impeding the removal of a home involved in the project despite the homeowner's wish to have it bought by the state. The entire village of Mocanaqua was deemed historic in 1988/1989 as a result of studies done for the new Mocanaqua/Shickshinny Bridge.

PENNDOT contends that significant changes

have occurred to the rail corridors, including track removal, that have damaged their historic integrity.

Similarly, PENNDOT contends that the home in Mocanaqua has undergone significant changes over the years and has lost its historic character.

PENNDOT is working on setting up a meeting with the Historic and Museum Commission to see if a solution can be worked out.

All 3 projects are in the preliminary engineering phase and will not be able to move to final design until these issues have been resolved. The delay could last from 4 months to 3 years.

Enhancement Projects (continued from Page 1)

the Coordinating Committee on February 28, 2002 where the recommendation received near unanimous approval.

The Lackawanna/Luzerne MPO was the first MPO in the state to use TIP funds to supplement enhancement funds in 1999. Only a few other MPOs took this innovative step for the 2001 round. This action by the MPO shows its strong support for enhancement projects.

Lackawanna County allocated enhancement funds to their following top five projects:

rehabilitation of the NJ Central RR Freight Station, restoration of the Boston & Maine, Providence Square Redevelopment, restoration of the Erie Lackawanna Dining Car, and the D&H Transportation Museum. The remaining six projects will receive TIP funds.

Enhancement funds will totally cover the Phase I costs of the Delaware & Lehigh Corridor project and the Back Mountain Trail Link project, ranked first and second respectively, in Luzerne County. The third-ranked project, the Pittston Riverfront Park,

will receive a portion of enhancement funds and a portion of TIP funds. The remaining nine projects will receive TIP funds to cover their Phase I costs.

The proposal to use TIP funds will go before the State Transportation Commission in the summer. If the proposal receives approval, these funds will become available to the enhancement project applicants at the start of the new federal fiscal year in October.

**LACKAWANNA/LUZERNE METROPOLITAN
PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

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web site

New Maintenance Facility and Expanded Jet Service at the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport

The Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport recently held a ribbon-cutting ceremony for a new Snow Removal Equipment Storage/Maintenance Facility. The new facility replaces the 30-year old Maintenance Facility which no longer provided adequate space or maintenance capabilities.

The new building, 24,500 square feet in size, will house the airport's entire fleet of snow removal vehicles and maintenance supplies, and will serve as the primary repair station for all airport vehicles.

Design and inspection work on the facility has been completed by Michael J. Pasonick, Jr., Inc., Wilkes-Barre, PA, and Acker Associates, Inc., Moscow, PA. Construction on the project has been completed by Allied Contractors and Engineers, Inc., Dallas, PA. The total project cost is

approximately \$2,561,000.

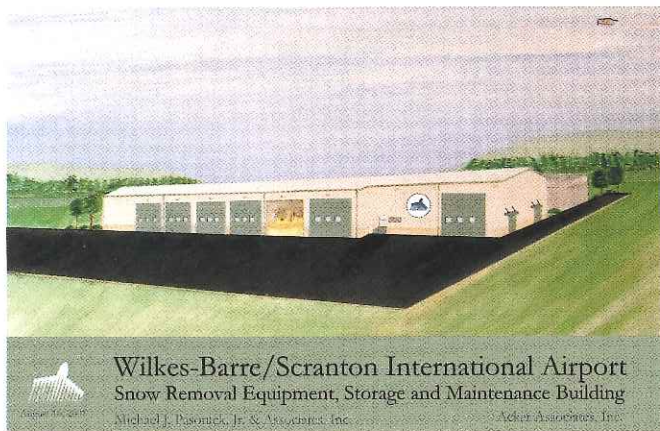
Airport officials recently announced that Delta Connection will offer customers daily jet service between Avoca and Delta's hub in Atlanta. The service, which will begin May 16, 2002, will consist of three non-stop, round trip flights daily between Avoca and Atlanta using

the Canadair Regional Jet (CRJ). Known for its convenience, comfort and speed, the CRJ boasts two-by-two seating, providing fliers with either an aisle or window seat. Recognized as the quietest commercial jet aircraft in the world, the CRJ can cruise at 530 mph at altitudes as high as 41,000 feet.

Flying to Atlanta provides travelers with a convenient choice of more than 882 daily flights to 210 domestic and international destinations.

Flights to Atlanta will leave Avoca at 6:20 AM, 12:50 PM, and 6:35 PM daily. Flights from Atlanta to Avoca will depart at 9:30 AM, 4:00 PM, and 9:45 PM.

For more information on the new flight service between Avoca and Atlanta, contact Delta Reservations at 1-800-221-1212 or visit delta.com.



**Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport
Snow Removal Equipment, Storage and Maintenance Building**

Michael J. Pasonick, Jr. & Associates, Inc.

Acker Associates, Inc.