

Spring

2014



LACKAWANNA/LUZERNE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

# CONNECTIONS

## PennDOT Rolls Out Act 89

PennDOT held state and regional press conferences on Thursday, April 3 to inform the public about the provisions of Act 89, the recently-enacted state transportation bill and its effect on local road and bridge projects.

Statewide, an additional \$600 million will be available for projects during the 2014 construction season.

Regionally, about \$71 million will be available as a result of Act 89. These funds will support 22 additional roadway and bridge projects. Fifteen paving projects will improve 145 miles of non-interstate roads and 68 miles of interstate highway. There will be 4 state bridge and 2 local bridge replacement projects, and 1 betterment project throughout the 6 counties serviced by District 4-0.

The following roads will be paved in Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties:

### Lackawanna County Paving Projects

Keyser Avenue from Market Street to Ferdinand Street;

West Grove Street in Clarks Summit from the Morgan Highway to US Routes 6/11;

Main Street in Scranton from Oak Street in Taylor to North Blakely Street;

US Route 6 in Clarks Summit from the turnpike interchange to the D&H Railroad Bridge at the north end of Clarks Summit;

Wildcat Road in Blakely and Archbald Boroughs and Scott and Greenfield Townships from Gino Merli Drive to the Susquehanna County line;

I-81, northbound and southbound from Clarks Summit to

Waverly; and

I-84, Dunmore, Roaring Brook and Jefferson Townships from Exit 2 to Exit 8.

### Bridge Replacement Projects

Stafford Avenue (SR 3021) over Meadow Creek;

T-412, Jefferson Township.

### Luzerne County Paving Projects

SR 29 (South Crossvalley Exp.) from I-81 to the Susquehanna River;

SR 309 from Green St. in Hazleton to Maces Road in Butler Township;

SR 415 (Memorial Highway) from SR 118 to Lake Drive in Harvey's Lake Borough;

SR 940 from I-81 to Bridge St. in White Haven Borough;

SR 2001 (Ashley Rd./St. Mary's Rd.) from Main St. to the Sans Souci Parkway in Hanover Township;

SR 2002 (E. Main St./Sans Souci Parkway) from Main St. to Sans Souci Parkway in Hanover Township;

SR 3001 (Alden Mtn. Rd./Roberts St./River St./Main St.) from Nuangola Rd. to the West Nanticoke Bridge;

SR 3034 (Butler Dr.) from Rock Glen Road to the Conyngham Borough line.

### Bridge Projects

SR 1001 (Washington St. in Larksville Borough) - replace bridge over Brown's Creek;

SR 2026 (Sordoni/Kunkle Rd.) - replace bridge over Leonard's Creek in Dallas Township.

### Other Impacts

The additional funding produced by Act 89 represents an investment in Pennsylvania's future. Road/Bridge construction projects produce jobs. Statewide, 18,000 jobs are estimated to be created in 2014. Besides impacting the individuals in the work force, this investment ensures that Pennsylvania will remain competitive with neighboring states economically by having a safe and efficient transportation system.

The full impact of Act 89 will unfold over a 5-year period as the changes in revenue-increasing options gradually take effect. By the fifth year, 50,000 jobs are estimated to have been created, and 12,000 jobs preserved statewide. Funding wise, between \$2.3 and \$2.4 billion will be expended over the 5-year period, with \$1.3 billion going toward state roads and bridges and \$237 million for local roads and bridges.

Public transportation will also benefit from the bill by receiving \$207 million in 2014, and between \$480-495 million by the fifth year.

\$345 million, representing an eight percent increase, will be distributed to local governments in liquid fuels funds.



George Roberts addresses the press regarding Act 89



## Seatbelts - Why You Should Always Use Them

Besides being state law, seat belts should always be worn for a much more basic reason - they save lives and decrease the number of severe injuries.

The chances of surviving a serious crash are three to four times greater when wearing a seatbelt, regardless of the speed of the vehicle.

Statistically, most crashes occur at speeds under 40 MPH, and 75 percent of deaths and injuries occur less than 25 miles from home.

There are some common misconceptions about seatbelts being impediments to safety in certain situations, such as when trying to escape from a burning or submerged vehicle.

Less than 0.5% of all accidents involve car fires or submerged vehicles, but when



they do occur, seat belts can help the driver and passengers remain conscious and exit faster.

Some people think that they would be able to stop themselves from being thrown out of the vehicle by using their hands instead of a seatbelt. The force generated in a head-on collision is about the same force a person experiences from

falling out of a 3-story window.

People are much more likely to be killed if they are thrown out of a vehicle. A buckled seatbelt keeps you in the vehicle and protected by the surrounding metal.

For those people who find the seatbelt hits them at an uncomfortable place on their shoulder, PennDOT suggests drivers or passengers pull the belt off their shoulder just enough to relieve the pressure. The belt will catch, like a window shade, and provide enough slack. The seatbelt should never be put under the arm or behind you because it greatly reduces the seatbelt's effectiveness.

Sometimes people think that their driving skills will prevent them from being in an accident and needing a seatbelt. However, tens of thousands of people die in traffic accidents every year. No one ever thinks it will happen to them until it does.

## Bundling Program Benefits Luzerne County Bridge Projects

PennDOT recently established a bridge bundling pilot project to help local municipalities that are unable to replace or rehabilitate bridges in a timely manner, do so by using standardized designs and pre-fabricated beams. This process saves money and time.

PennDOT Central Office personnel worked with the county engineering department on selecting 10 bridges that fit the parameters of the bundling program. These bridges all had the potential to move through the design process quickly and did not have any major Right-of-Way, utility, or environmental impacts.

The county engineer, experienced PennDOT staff and a design consultant were able to

come up with a list of 10 projects - 7 bridge replacement projects and 3 bridge demolition projects. The bid for the 10-bridge bundling project came in at just under \$5 million.

*The following bridges will be replaced:*

T-314, Mountain Road, over Black Creek in Black Creek Township;

T-387, Hollow Road over Little Wapwallopen Creek in Dorrance Township;

County Rd. (CR) 39, Beisels Road over Nescopeck Creek in Butler Township;

CR 3, Sorbertown Hill Road, over a branch of Hunlock Creek in Lehman Township;

T-404, St. Mary's Road over Little Wapwallopen Creek in Dorrance Township;

T-451, Thorne Hill Road over Shickshinny Creek in Union Township; and

T-486, E. Poplar Street over Harveys Creek in Plymouth Township.

*The following bridges will be demolished:*

T-676, E. Salt Road, over Pikes Creek in Lehman Township;

T-486, Valley View Road over Little Pine Creek in New Columbus Borough; and

Pine Creek Road over Pine Creek in New Columbus Borough.

## Senator Casey Visits Area to Advocate For Increased Funding for Pennsylvania

Senator Robert Casey held a news conference along the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Trail on May 2nd at the structurally-deficient (SD) Elm Street Bridge in Scranton to highlight the need to fund the repair or replacement of infrastructure in the nation, and specifically in Lackawanna County.

Senator Casey noted that Pennsylvania has the highest number of SD bridges in the nation, and that those bridges not only pose a safety concern, but also impede economic development. Businesses considering locat-

ing here look at the quality of the infrastructure. They want to see good roads and bridges and see that communities are investing in new assets and keeping its existing assets in good repair. The Senate will soon begin debate on a long-term transportation funding bill to replace MAP-21 which was a short-term fix. Casey will advocate for a transportation bill that meets the needs of the nation and assures Pennsylvania gets adequate funds to substantially decrease the number of SD bridges.

Steve Pitoniak, Transportation Planning Manager for the Lackawanna County Regional Planning Commission, noted that the life span of a bridge is about 50 years, and that the interstate system, built in the 1960's and 70's is also about that age. He stated that now that the state has come through with increased funding through Act 89, it is time for the federal government to do the same.



## Long Range Transportation Plan Update To Begin

The update of the 2011 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), which was part of the Bi-County Comprehensive Plan, known as the Lackawanna-Luzerne Regional Plan, will begin over the next few months.

McCormick Taylor, Inc., the firm that prepared the regional plan, will perform the update under PennDOT's open contract with the firm.

### *Data Inventory & Assessment*

The starting point for updating the LRTP is evaluation of the current transportation infrastructure which, when analyzed, will produce current transportation trends and future needs.

The data and mapping inventory amassed for the 2011 LRTP will be refreshed using the most current available information, and will be available for review during all project meetings.

The Environmental Justice (EJ) profiles and analysis will be updated to reflect data collected during the 2010 census and the most recent American Community Survey data.

The final step of the Data Inventory and Assessment phase will involve a backward-looking comparison with the condition and performance of the transportation system as it was in 2011. This update, coupled with the funding spent on the system since 2011, will provide cost-benefit indicators.

### *Transportation Objective Visioning*

The Goals and Objectives from the 2011

LRTP will be reviewed by all involved parties and adjusted, if needed, to accommodate changes that have occurred over the past four years. The themes of the 2011 comprehensive plan, in particular, the aspects that affect the transportation plan, will be reviewed. The most important outcome from this phase will be the development of performance measures and project prioritization criteria.

MAP-21 calls for a performance-based transportation system that supports national goals related to the following: Safety, Infrastructure Condition, Congestion Reduction, System Reliability, Freight Movement, Reduced Project Delivery Times, Economic Vitality, and Environmental Sustainability.

The specific data used in these evaluations of project performance will come from the following data:

Crash History - CDART System;

Roadway Condition - International Roughness Index;

Bridge Condition - Bridge Management System and local agency databases;

Congestion - Volume to Capacity Ratios;

System Reliability - PennDOT and Local Roadway Closure Data;

Freight Movement - PennDOT's system-wide traffic count program, FHWA's Freight Analysis Framework, and local railroad and freight movement sources;

Project Delays - PennDOT's Let Schedule Data.

### *Plan Implementation*

The consultant will guide the Steering Committee through the project prioritization and ranking process using the Decision Lens software. Cost estimates and revenue scenarios, based on PennDOT's financial guidance document, will be used to create a fiscally-constrained project list.

The Benefits & Burdens Analysis prepared for the 2011 Regional Plan will be updated in line with the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) projects to consider the proximity and impact they will have on minority and in-poverty populations.

McCormick Taylor will guide the MPO staff throughout the Public Participation process, produce a draft document for review, make any necessary changes, and provide the MPO with a final version to be reviewed and/or approved by the MPO TAC, Technical, and Coordinating Committees.



*Public meeting attendees during 2011 LRTP Plan Preparation*

## Transportation Alternative Program Funding Round Open

Map-21, the current federal transportation bill, combined many different funding programs. The Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) is one of the new funding categories that includes Transportation Enhancement and Safe Streets to School projects.

A recent funding application round for TAP projects produced ten eligible applications from Luzerne and Lackawanna Counties - 8 from Luzerne County and 2

from Lackawanna County.

The MPO Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) reviewed, evaluated and scored the applications at their meeting on May 14th.

TAC members were sent the applications to review prior to the meeting, and the applicants were available at the meeting to provide a brief overview of the project and answer questions from the committee.

The total amount of available funding for the MPO over a 2-year period is \$760,984.

Based on the scores given to each application, the recommendations of the TAC were reviewed and voted upon by the Technical Committee at their May 21st meeting. Their recommendation was acted upon by the Coordinating Committee at their June 4th meeting. The recommendations will be sent to PennDOT Central Office which will make the final decision on which projects will receive funding.





**LACKAWANNA/LUZERNE METROPOLITAN  
PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

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## MPO Transportation Advisory Committee Ranks TAP Projects

The MPO Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) met on Wednesday, May 14th to hear presentations by TAP project sponsors, ask questions of them, and then evaluate and score each application.

Two projects received the highest score of 40 - the Carbondale River Walk and the Delaware & Lehigh (D&L) Trail.

The Carbondale Riverwalk is part of the larger 70-mile Lackawanna River Heritage Trail that connects New York State to the City of Pittston. This project will close a critical, 2-mile gap in the existing trail and link the City of Carbondale to Fell Township, both of which have been supportive of the project. Besides closing a gap, the trail will improve safety for walkers and bikers who now have to navigate narrow, winding, heavily-traveled streets. If funded, the project can be ready for construction as early as the spring of 2015.

The purpose of the D&L project is to provide a safe and ADA-compatible crossing of the trail at Middleburg Road in Dennison

Township, Luzerne County. It also provides a safe connection between Lehigh Gorge State Park and the recently-completed Black Diamond Trail Section of the D&L trail, giving pedestrians and bikers a 40-mile stretch of trail to access for a variety of uses.

The next highest scoring application was the Pittston City Streetscape - Phase 3



*Section of Riverwalk in Need of Expansion & Rehabilitation*

project which includes the section of Main Street between Market Street and Columbus Avenue. The streetscape improvements include bump-outs of curbs, improved crosswalks, sidewalk replacement, and streetlights. All of these elements will enhance safety for pedestrians patronizing downtown businesses and complete the revitalization of the portion of Main Street located in the Central Business District. The project is 90% designed and could be ready for construction in the spring of 2015.

Rounding out the top four applications is the North State Street Sidewalk project in Clarks Summit Borough. Its purpose is to add sidewalks in the northern section of Clarks Summit to promote walking and biking and thereby provide a safe alternative to vehicular use in the downtown area. The new sidewalks will serve as a link to the Countryside Conservancy's Trolley Trail which begins near the site where the sidewalks would end at the Clarks Summit boundary.