

Summer

2012



LACKAWANNA/LUZERNE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

CONNECTIONS

PennDOT Soliciting Ideas

During a recent conference call with the transportation planning partners statewide, Transportation Secretary Barry Schoch spoke about IdeaLink, which is an on-line suggestion box for PennDOT employees.

Started last August, IdeaLink gives employees the opportunity to suggest ways to improve operations at the Department of Transportation, provide better customer services, and/or help improve safety on the highways.

To date, over 600 suggestions have been made and about 130 of them have been put into practice.

Keith Williams, Traffic Engineer for District 4-0, took advantage of IdeaLink and submitted a suggestion about installing inflation stations at rest stops where drivers could check the air pressure in their tires.

As it turns out, tires that are improperly inflated were the cause of about 35 per cent of crashes in Pennsylvania in 2010. Properly-inflated tires also promote better gas mileage and can improve fuel efficiency by over 3 percent.

IdeaLink is part of a larger modernization effort underway at the Department whereby staff is looking at

how all processes and technologies work today. Some of the processes were put in place decades ago, and may no longer make sense. They can now be evaluated and improved via technology that was not available when first established.

Converting paper-oriented processes to computerized on-line processes has proven to be extremely efficient.

The best example of this was turning the Highway Occupancy Permit (HOP) application and review process from paper to computer. Since the new system was put in place in October of 2011, the review time has dropped from sixty days to nine days. (HOPs are issued for driveways, local roads and utility construction work.)

In addition to Keith Williams' suggestion, another PennDOT employee suggested that the date on which interstate overhead signs are erected be imprinted on them. Overhead signs are made to reflect the headlights of vehicles, making it easier to see the sign at night. However, these signs lose their reflectivity over time and no longer aid drivers. By imprinting the date on the sign, it would make it easier for PennDOT to determine the age of the sign and when it

should be replaced, which is about every ten years.

These two ideas - inflation stations and replacing overhead signs before they lose their ability to help drivers see - are things that the average driver rarely thinks about, but could impact interstate driving safety.

District 4-0 will do a pilot study of Keith Williams' inflation station idea at the Great Bend I-81 Welcome Center near the New York border sometime this fall.

Although Mr. Williams was at first wary of the IdeaLink project, he has been pleasantly surprised with the response to his suggestion. "This program came from the highest level, directly from the Secretary to the employees. It shows that the top brass are willing to listen to what people in the trenches have to say." He went on to comment, "PennDOT employees are civil servants who want to do good things for the people of Pennsylvania. People don't realize how creative we can be at PennDOT. There are a lot of great, smart people working here who are always coming up with creative ideas. IdeaLink is a great program that cultivates that creativity."

Steamtown to Run Fall Foliage Excursions

Steamtown National Historic Site will be running fall foliage excursions on various dates throughout the month of October.

On October 6, 13, 14, 21, 27, and 28th, the train will travel to the Moscow passenger station and freight house.

On October 7th, the diesel-powered train will travel to Gouldsboro Station where passengers will experience a taste of the 1920's in the style of the *Great Gatsby* provided by the Coolbaugh Township Historical Association.

On October 20th, the train will

travel to the Tobyhanna Station where Lackawanna Valley Heritage Ambassador, Dominic Keating, will lead a tour of an historic mill, originally built as a wagon factory in 1871.

For more information, call Steamtown at 340-5200.

National Emergency Grant Workers Help Repair Trail

Tropical Storm Lee and Hurricane Irene wreaked havoc on the Greater Hazleton Rails to Trails (GHRT) in 2011. The storms caused severe wash-outs in many parts of the trail, which made it impassable, especially for people using strollers, wheelchairs and other assisted-walking aids.

The Greater Hazleton Area Civic Partnership (GHACP) oversees the maintenance of the trail. It is a non-profit organization comprised of volunteers, and headed by Bob Skulsky, GHACP Executive Director. Mr. Skulsky recognized that the damage inflicted by the 2011 storms was going to require more than the usual amount of repair and clean-up work and funding than the GHACP could provide. The GHACP succeeded in obtaining grants from the Luzerne Foundation, the Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Emergency Relief Funds and donations from private citizens.

At the suggestion of a GHACP board member, Mr. Skulsky contacted Trina Moss,



Above: Washed-Out Portion of the GHRT following 2011 Storms. Below: NEG Workers

Coordinator of the National Emergency Grant (NEG) workers, to see if NEG workers could assist in the trail clean-up effort. After meeting with Ms. Moss twice and filing the appropriate paperwork, the NEG workers began working on the GHRT on June 4, 2012.

Following a week of hectic work repairing the most severely washed-out trail seg-

ments, the workers and volunteers had the trail in good enough condition to host the 9th Annual Hike & Bike Event on Saturday, June 11th.

This celebration of National Trails Day draws over 700 people who walk or ride the trail and enjoy a free picnic afterward.

According to Bob Skulsky, "Without a doubt, the trail would not have been restored in this time frame without the aid of the NEG workers. They did excellent work and cared about the trail as if it were their own."

Submitted By Bob Skulsky



\$75,000 Grant To Be Used for Trail Design

The Lackawanna Heritage Valley National & State Heritage Area (LVH) recently received a \$75,000 grant from the Department of Conservation of Natural Resources (DCNR), which will be used to design a half-mile section of the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail (LRHT) in Carbondale.

The new trail, named the Carbondale Riverwalk, will re-use the abandoned New York, Ontario and Western Railway Company rail bed that runs along the east side of the Lackawanna River from John Street

in downtown Carbondale, to an historic railroad bridge adjacent to Thornton's Recycling. There are future plans to link the new trail section to an existing one-mile section of the LRHT on the west side of the river in the Carbondale Industrial Park, and to continue the Carbondale Riverwalk on the east side of the river to Simpson Borough.

The Riverwalk will consist of two trails - a 10-foot wide paved portion and an adjacent 6-foot wide packed stone-dust portion. Sev-

eral scenic overlooks of the Lackawanna River and Racket Brook will be visible from the trail.

The project will close a critical gap in the LRHT system, and will provide a safe, accessible pedestrian and bicycle route for the public. It will connect the 38-mile Delaware & Hudson Rail Trail, and the Ontario and Western Rail Trail with an 11-mile section of the LRHT from Carbondale to Simpson.

Submitted by Colleen Carter, LVH

Getting Around in British Columbia

As is my habit when traveling, I like to take note of the transportation system and/or practices to see what they do that we don't and vice versa. My high-school friend, Chris, and I traveled to British Columbia (BC) in August and had the most multi-modal experience ever.

Victoria, Vancouver Island, BC (Capital)

To get to our first stop, the city of Victoria on Vancouver Island, I traveled by car to the airport, by plane to Vancouver via Chicago, boarded a Pacific Coast Coach which, after 45 minutes, boarded a BC Ferry at Tsawassen. After exiting the ferry an

hour and a half later, we rode for another 45 minutes before reaching downtown Victoria.

While riding into Victoria, I noticed that the medians were not mowed. Not to dis the Canadian road crews, but I thought to myself that they looked a little unkempt. However, our bus driver mentioned that this is done on purpose to preserve the native species of grass. If the grass is mowed, it becomes more vulnerable to infiltration by harmful insects and intrusive grass species.

Although a part of Great Britain's Commonwealth of Nations, Canadians drive on the right, like us.



Unmowed grass in median

(Continued on Page 3)

Citizen Input Prompts Changes to Traffic-Calming Project

At a public meeting on the River Street traffic-calming project in Wilkes-Barre City last summer, Pennoni Associates and PennDOT representatives received many comments from the public regarding the new design for River Street from North Street to South Street.

Those in attendance had voiced concerns over how emergency vehicles would be able to navigate around traffic on a 1-lane roadway if there were landscaped medians. They also had concerns about the right-turning traffic from the Market Street Bridge onto South River Street.

PennDOT and the consultants went back to the drawing board to see how these concerns could be ameliorated while still remaining true to the purpose of the project - pedestrian safety and better access to the River Common and Riverfront Park facilities.

The revisions that were presented at the public meeting on September 18 on the Wilkes University campus include the following:

The curbed landscaped medians have been replaced with mountable curbed medians with stamped pavement (like you would see at a pedestrian walkway). The stamped pavement will resemble the brick work used for the Riverfront Park.

Except at the intersection of S. River and E. Northampton Streets, the proposed median in the River Street northbound lanes from South Street to E. Northampton Street has been eliminated and been replaced by a shoulder.

The median between Market and Union Streets will end just north of the mid-block pedestrian crosswalk.

Solid lines will be used where there are two lanes of traffic as opposed to the existing white broken lines.

Share-the-Road signs will be placed throughout the corridor encouraging drivers to accommodate bicyclists.

Stamped-pavement will be used to designate crosswalk areas.

The intersection of Market and River Streets will be re-configured to a more traditional 4-way intersection. Continuous right turns from the Market Street Bridge onto S. River Street will not be permitted. This is being done to eliminate the weaving from lane to lane that occurs between Market and E. Northampton Streets.

Four lanes of traffic will remain on N. River Street between a proposed mid-block crosswalk (between Market and Union Streets) to the intersection with North Street. Signal improvements, crosswalks and pavement markings will be done to improve pedestrian safety in this section of roadway.

According to PennDOT and the consultant, all of these revisions will improve capacity throughout the River Street Corridor.

The response to the proposed revisions was positive by those in attendance. Construction is projected to begin in 2015.



Project Rendering of River/Northampton St. Intersection

Getting Around in British Columbia (continued from Page 2)

I'd never thought about this, but I guess it makes sense that everyone on one continent should drive on the same side of the road. It probably prevents lots of accidents near the border crossings.

A sign regarding jaywalking in downtown caught our attention while walking around the city. The very polite sign, which stated that jaywalkers should have a word with themselves, was one we both agreed we would probably never see in an American city.

Walking was our primary mode of transportation while in Victoria. Our hotel was located near the touristy part of town, not far from the harbor. The harbor (which as far as we could tell was not named), was littered with all kinds of boats and ships, from sailboats to large ferries. The buzz of float planes was constant as they took off and landed in the harbor waters.

Unlike Northeastern Pennsylvania, there were no individual parking meters in Victoria. Parking spaces are numbered and the driver puts money in a centrally-located kiosk, gets a timed ticket, returns to the car, and displays the ticket in the front window.



The price of gas in the area in August was \$1.35 per liter which equates to about \$5.00 per gallon. Twenty-four cents of every liter of gas sold in BC goes to support of public transit.

Victoria, referred to as the Garden City, is adorned with flowers, both in the downtown and in the outlying residential areas. Multi-globed street lights are arrayed with huge baskets of flowers. Seeing the city on foot gives you an opportunity to appreciate the beauty up close and personal.

After seeing all we could see in Victoria, we traveled by bus and ferry to Vancouver.

To be continued.....

Admonishing sign in downtown Victoria for jaywalkers



**LACKAWANNA/LUZERNE METROPOLITAN
PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

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*MPO Web Page: [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
www.neparoads.com



Fall Local Transportation Assistance Program Courses

The following Local Transportation Assistance Program (LTAP) courses have been scheduled for the fall:

Work Zone Safety Control - Now Closed!!

Friday, September 28, 2012
8:00 AM - 12:00 PM
Hazle Township Municipal Building
101 W. 27th Street
Hazle Township, PA 18202

Winter Maintenance

Thursday, October 4, 2012
8:00 AM - 3:00 PM
Smithfield Township Building
1155 Red Fox Road
East Stroudsburg, PA 18301
Telephone: 570-223-5082
Website: www.smithfieldtownship.com

Winter Maintenance

Thursday, October 9, 2012
8:00 AM - 3:00 PM
Clarks Summit Borough Building
304 South State Street
Clarks Summit, PA 18411
Telephone: 570-586-9316
Website: www.clarkssummitboro.org



Traffic Signs Class Attendees in June, 2012

Safe Driver Course

Thursday, October 11, 2012
8:00 AM - 12:00 PM
Lackawaxen Township Building
169 Urban Road
Lackawaxen, PA 18435
Telephone: 570-685-7288
Website: www.lackawaxen.org

Americans With Disabilities Act

Wednesday, November 7, 2012
8:00 AM - 12:00 PM
Schuylkill Community Education Council
1-7 West Center Street
Mahanoy City, PA 17948
Telephone: 570-773-1270
Website: [http://
www.schuylkilleducation.org/](http://www.schuylkilleducation.org/)

For more information on LTAP, contact
Kate McMahon, NEPA, at 655-5551

Masthead Photo: New Coal St. Configuration