

Winter

2002



LACKAWANNA / LUZERNE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Connections

Davis Street Project To Be Done in Phases

Work on the Davis Street/Montage Mountain Road interchange reconstruction project is underway and is scheduled to continue through the summer of 2003.

PENNDOT is urging drivers to use the following alternate route for the duration of the \$20.4 million project: From I-81, take the Moosic Exit (180/50) and follow US Route 11 south to the junction with PA Route 502; follow PA 502 east to Glenmaura National Boulevard; take the Boulevard to Montage Mountain Road.

The project will consist of the following 3 phases:

Phase 1:

Now through April, 2002:

Temporary extension of the I-81 southbound off-ramp to Davis Street and Montage Mountain Road was built. The extension was extended by 1000 feet to prevent traffic exiting I-81 from backing up on the southbound exit ramp.

The on-ramp connecting Davis Street/Montage Mountain Road to I-81 northbound will be temporarily extended by 500 feet. Concrete barriers will be erected and lines painted.

Removal of rocks along the on-ramp connecting Davis Street/Montage Mountain Road to I-81 northbound will take place from January-April, 2002. The rocks will be chipped away, not blasted. No lane closures are expected during this process.

Phase 2:

April-October, 2002:

Widening of the shoulder area along I-81 will occur. Two lanes of traffic will remain open in each direction. Should any lanes be closed, they will be closed at night (8PM-6AM).

A new off ramp from I-81 northbound to Montage Mountain Road will be constructed. This exit will be located south of the existing

with Davis Street across from the new Stafford Avenue entrance on the west side of the Mobil Gas Station.

The on-ramp to I-81 northbound will be widened to 2 lanes and extended to the area near the curve on I-81 northbound.

Phase 3:

October-September, 2003:

The I-81 southbound off-ramp for Davis Street only will be reconstructed. A new 6-lane



The Davis Street Exit as it will look upon completion of the project.

exit ramps. A new loop off ramp from I-81 to Montage Mountain Road will be constructed, thus providing 2 different ramps at the Davis Street Exit. The first ramp, located near the existing ramp, will provide egress for Davis Street, Stafford Avenue, and the Minooka section of Scranton traffic only. The second ramp will provide egress for Montage Mountain Road via the Davis Street Bridge.

A new on-ramp from Davis Street to I-81 southbound will be constructed. The new on-ramp will intersect

bridge will be constructed to carry Davis Street over I-81. New pavement will be laid on I-81 in the area of the new interchange.

Drivers can get timely updates on the project by checking PENNDOT's web site. Go to www.dot.state.pa.us, click on "regional information" on state map, click on Lackawanna County, then click on "Davis Street Update".

The contractor for the job is Slusser Brothers Trucking & Excavation of West Hazleton.

Disabled Advocating Statewide Shared-Ride Program

The Northeast Pennsylvania Center for Independent Living, along with other disabled advocacy groups across the state, are urging state lawmakers to pass House Bill 2090. This bill would establish a statewide Shared Ride Program that would service rural areas and persons under 65 years of age in addition to the existing program in urban areas that services only people 65 and older.

After more than six years of lobbying the state, people with disabilities were successful in convincing the Department of Transportation to assess the need for transportation in rural areas. The study recommended that a pilot project be conducted in the following eight rural counties: Clearfield, Cumberland, Elk, Jefferson, Greene, Schuylkill, Washington, and York. The project got underway in January, 2001 and will run through June, 2002.

Disabled persons under 65 years of age who



Keith Williams lobbying for passage of HB 2090

live outside areas served by fixed route transit are eligible to use the service.

The cost of each trip will vary based on the fare schedule used by a particular county. In general, disabled riders will pay about 15% of the cost of the trip, with the pilot project paying the remainder. Under this pilot program, transportation services are provided via the Shared-Ride transit providers. "Shared-Ride" means that the person making a trip must be willing to share the vehicle with other

riders making similar trips. Riders must call a day ahead to schedule a Shared-Ride trip which may be door-to-door or curb-to-curb, depending on the policies of a particular county. All trips are provided by handi-capped accessible vehicles.

The results of the pilot program to date indicate an increase from 218 trips in January, 2001 to 4,400 trips in September. A slight decline in trips in September was offset by an increase in October. 51% of all rides in September involved getting people to work, 18% of the trips were for medical purposes, 10% were shopping oriented, 9% were related to education, and 8% were for recreational purposes.

Transportation Secretary Brad Mallory supports an increase in the budget from \$3 million to \$6 million for the Shared-Ride Program and advocates are working toward making this increase a reality.

Keystone Landfill Case Settlement to Affect Transportation Projects in Lackawanna & Luzerne Counties

The settlement of the Keystone Landfill Right-Of-Way (ROW) and 33 additional land claims against PENNDOT District 4-0 by Louis DeNaples, owner of the Keystone Landfill, will seriously impact transportation projects in Lackawanna & Luzerne Counties over the next several years

The outcome of the lawsuit provides for a payment of \$24,638,555 in principal and \$16,621,415 in interest for a total settlement cost of \$41.2 million up to Novem-

ber 7, 2001, the date of the court's decision. Additional interest will accrue at a rate of 10% to the end of 2001. For 2002, the interest rate will be approximately 6% on the combined settlement amount.

The case stems from the claim by Mr. DeNaples that the ROW of the Governor Robert Casey Highway infringes on his property.

An initial payment of \$8.1 million will be made early in 2002. The payment will be taken from the current Transportation Im-

provement Program (TIP). This payment will cause the Business Route 6/PA Route 347 Interchange project to be deferred 1 year. Funds were deferred from the East Mountain Betterment project in Scranton and the Route 315 widening project in Luzerne County in order to make the first payment. Options to pay off the debt are being discussed with the MPO planning partners. Regardless of the payment method, additional delays for other projects will occur. The net result will be the deferral of one year's construction over the repayment period.

Have Area Motorists Forgotten The Meaning of "Merge" and Yield?"

In My Opinion by Nancy Snee

After having been nearly forced into on-coming traffic by another driver on Christmas night (so much for good will toward men, or in this case, women), I feel it is necessary to remind area drivers of the definition of the words "merge" and "yield".

I was driving on Business Route 309 north in the area where two lanes merge into one just past the entrance to Wegman's and Appleby's. I was in the through lane. The driver behind me was in the right lane—the lane that requires drivers to merge. Webster's New World dictionary defines

"merge" in this way: "to join together; to unite; to combine". Nothing in this definition suggests that the driver in the merge lane should speed up and overtake the driver in the through lane to the point where that driver is forced to stop or move into on-coming traffic in order to get out of the way of the non-merging driver.

In contrast to merging, this behavior can be more aptly described as "vying", which is defined as "a struggle for superiority, or to enter into a competition with". Luckily for me, there was no on-coming traffic around

that night to make a dangerous situation even more dangerous.

There are several locations in the area where drivers are directed to yield. Webster's New World dictionary defines "yield" in this way: "to give way, lose precedence; to let another, especially a motorist, have the right of way".

"To have the right of way"—seems like a lost concept these days! More and more often I feel that I never have the right of way while driving.

Greater Hazleton Chamber Transportation Committee Gets Update From District Engineer

Members of the Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce Transportation Committee recently sat down with PENNDOT District 4-0 Engineer, Chuck Mattei, to discuss the transportation needs of the Hazleton Area and to get an update from Mr. Mattei regarding planned projects for that area.

According to Mattei, "At least one 'big ticket' project is planned each year for the next five years in the Hazleton Area." These projects include the Broad Street Corridor Improvements, the reconstruction of the intersection of the Airport Beltway and PA Route 93, and the widening of the Airport Beltway. New pavement is also scheduled for several area roadways and work will be done on at least nine bridges in the region.

According to Gary Danish, Chairman of the Transportation Committee, "The Chamber meets with Chuck Mattei on a regular basis to address the area's transportation needs. The Chamber appreciates the ongoing support we receive from PENNDOT in addressing our concerns."

The following roadway projects are slated for the Hazleton Area:

Repaving of more than 12 miles of state roads including Sandy Valley Road (SR 2044), Tannery Road (SR 2046), Weatherly Road (SR 2055), and East and West Diamond Avenue (SR 3030).

Broad Street Railroad Crossing, Nescopeck Borough: New warning

devices and gates are currently under construction at the rail crossings.

Broad & Diamond Intersection: This \$434,000 project includes widening of the intersection to provide for left turn lanes; traffic signals will be upgraded and interconnected; estimated time of project completion is spring of 2002.

Intersection of PA Route 93 and Airport Beltway: This \$1.5 million intersection improvement project includes turning lanes and a new signal system, and widening of PA Route 309 from the intersection south to 32nd Street. Construction will get underway in the summer/fall of 2002.

Broad Street Corridor and Hazleton Signals Project: The improvements designated in this \$6.7 million project include new travel lanes, parking, and sidewalk work from lower Broad Street near

the hospital to the West Hazleton line. Construction is expected to begin in 2004.

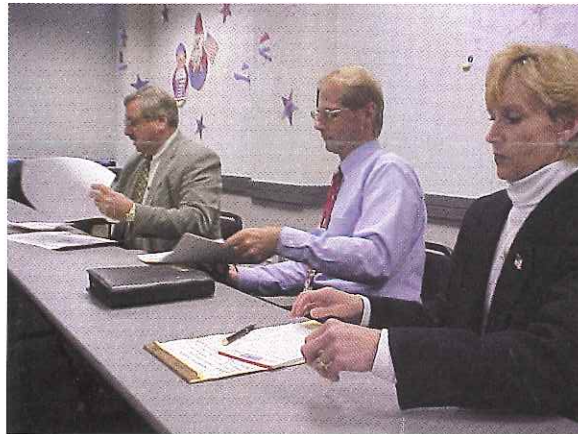
PA Route 924, Hazle Township: Route 924 will be widened from I-81 to the Schuylkill County line. Construction of this \$3.5 million project will begin in 2003.

PA Route 93, Seibertsville: This \$1.5 million project will consist of widening of the center turn lane, drainage, guard-rail, curbing, and traffic signal improvements at the intersection of Route 93 and County Road. Construction will begin in late 2002.

Airport Beltway Widening: In addition to widening, this \$4 million project will include turning lanes, traffic signal updates, and drainage improvements. Construction is expected to start in 2005.

Beltway Extension: The extension of the Hazleton Southwest Beltway from Route 93 to Stockton Road will cost an estimated \$1.1 million. Construction is slated to begin in 2006.

There are nine bridge projects slated to be done over the next several years, including two bridge replacement projects. The St. Johns Road Bridge and the Nescopeck Bridge will be replaced for an estimated \$1 million apiece. Estimated completion of the St. Johns Road Bridge is December 2002. Construction on the Nescopeck Bridge is expected to start in 2003.



District 4-0 Engineer Chuck Mattei discusses transportation projects with Gary Danish and Donna Palermo at recent meeting.

Have Area Motorists Forgotten the Meaning of "Merge" and "Yield"? In My Opinion by Nancy Snee

Remember when a motorist trying to make a turn across traffic sat and waited patiently until a kind-hearted driver gave him or her the go ahead to make the turn? The other driver would then gratefully give the other driver a little wave or blink their lights and go on his or her merry way. Nowadays no one waits to be granted that courtesy. Rather, drivers just pull out and the other driver is forced to let them go or risk hitting them.

In addition to not merging or yielding, drivers seem to think that yellow and red

lights denote "speed up" rather than "slow down and stop."

At least once or twice a week I see drivers going through red lights without any pretense of slowing down. Although many people view cameras at intersections as invasions of privacy, they may be the only way to control the disregard many motorists have for the rules, let alone the common courtesies, of the road.

There was a lot of talk in the weeks following the September 11 terrorist attacks about

a return to traditional values, about appreciating the people in our lives. Unfortunately, this hasn't translated well into our driving habits. There is very little consideration given to our fellow travelers on the road these days.

The prevailing attitude seems to be very self-centered - "I need to get where I'm going and God help you if you're in my way!"

Let's hope this attitude changes soon before more of us are placed in dangerous situations by a fellow driver "vying for superiority" rather than "merging" or "yielding".

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**Check out the PENNDOT web site at
www.dot.state.pa.us
Click on "regional information" for
updates from District 4-0**

Commuters in Search of a Park 'N Ride Lot

In an area like the Lackawanna/Luzerne MPO, where congestion has not been serious enough to prompt the majority of people to carpool, there has not been a huge outcry for carpooling programs, High Occupancy Lanes (HOV) and other ridesharing facilities.

However, check out any of the park 'n ride lots in the area and you'll see that they are used to capacity most days, even on weekends. One of the first park 'n ride facilities built is located on PA Route 315 in Pittston Township. The 48-space lot has become so well used that plans are underway to expand it to accommodate 124 vehicles. This will make it the largest park 'n ride lot in the MPO region.

There is a group of commuters from the Hazleton area that is in need of an even larger park 'n ride lot to accommodate the 150 workers who commute to the Tobyhanna Depot every day. Currently, these commuters park at three locations along PA Route 309 near the I-80 interchange—a church parking lot, a motel parking lot, and a local business owner's

lot. The commuters have been asked to pay a fee to the business owner for using his lot as a carpooling venue. Commuters using the church parking lot and the motel parking lot make a yearly donation to the owners of those lots. Commuters using park 'n ride lots pay no parking fees.

Two busses and three vans pick up the commuters at these lots Monday through Friday to make the 50-mile trip to Tobyhanna.

Riders pay between \$80 and \$90/month for

this service. Through a federal program established in April of 2001, about \$65 of this fee is reimbursed to commuters as an incentive to rideshare.

The Hazleton Area commuters have approached PENNDOT District 4-0 about constructing a park 'n ride lot along PA Route 309 near the I-80 interchange. According to Norm Oravic of District 4-0, most park 'n ride lots are built on PENNDOT Right Of Way (ROW) land. The District would need to determine whether there are any available ROW parcels in that area on which a park 'n ride facility could be constructed. Funding would also have to be designated from the Transportation Improvement Program for the facility. The cost of these lots can range from \$220,000 to \$1.2 million depending on the number of spaces being created and the amount of excavation that needs to be done.

At a recent meeting with the Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce Transportation Committee, District Engineer Chuck Mattei told the commuters that he would make it a priority to construct a park 'n ride lot in a convenient location for all concerned.



The Blackman Street Park 'N Ride Lot in Wilkes-Barre Twp.