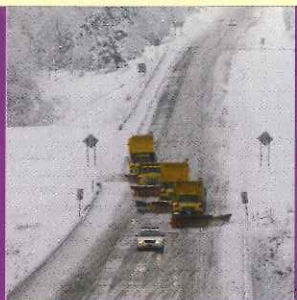


Winter

2004

LACKAWANNA/LUZERNE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

CONNECTIONS



In Remembrance of a Life Well Lived

by Nancy Snee

Chuck Mattei, District 4-0 Engineer for the past 17 years, lost his battle with cancer on December 20, 2003.

During his tenure as District Engineer, Chuck spearheaded numerous major projects in the 6-county area covered by District 4, including the North Cross Valley Expressway, the Carey Avenue Bridge, Exit 168 (46), the Governor Casey Highway and re-configuration of the I-81, I-84, I-380 interchange, the Tunkhannock By-Pass, the formation of a Transportation Management Association in the Back Mountain area of Luzerne County, the Broad Street Corridor improvements, and the PA 309 corridor improvements in the Back Mountain to name a few. The list goes on and on.

Although the number of professional achievements can help define a person, the kind of person you are is by far the quality for which you are ultimately remembered. In that way, Chuck Mattei will be remembered as a great person—smart, kind, friendly, quick to laugh, true to his word, fair. He was a teacher, a coach, a mentor, a student, and one of the best civil servants I've ever known.

I had the great privilege to be a student of Chuck's at Wilkes College (now known as Wilkes University). He taught me Environmental Science 101, a subject which I eventually decided to make my major. Chuck became a mentor to me, encouraging me all the time about my classes as well as my performance on the tennis team. He took an interest in me and it was so helpful knowing someone was on my side and wanted me to do well. When I told him that I thought I should have majored in music, he told me that I could always pursue music as an avocation and still have a job in my major, which is

exactly how it turned out. When I was a senior, Chuck left Wilkes to pursue a Masters/Doctorate at Rennselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) in the Urban and Environmental Studies Department. This program offered various concentrations from engineering to planning. He thought that the program would be a good one for me to pursue after graduation, and through his efforts, I received a full scholarship to RPI and eventually received a Masters degree in Urban & Environmental Studies. I'm sure I was grateful at the time and expressed my thanks, but the older I get, the more I appreciate the great gift he gave me, not only in terms of the education I received, but the life-long friends I met and the growing up I did there.

Our paths crossed again when Chuck became District 4-0 Engineer. With Chuck at the helm, I always felt secure that things would be done thoroughly and correctly. He sometimes took some good-natured razzing about his thoroughness at MPO meetings, but we left those meetings knowing much more than we did when we arrived.

From my perspective, Chuck Mattei was a totally great guy and I will think of him and miss him every time I walk into the District 4-0 building.

Several other people from the MPO have submitted the following comments about Chuck and how it was to work with him:

Karl Pfeiffenberger, Scranton Chamber of Commerce:

"Chuck's love, concern and interest for his fellow man and his community were demonstrated in many ways. He was our teacher, counselor, advisor and friend. His genuine love for his work provided an inspiration to all of us—one that cannot be replaced. His laughter and smile



Chuck Mattei, District 4-0 Engineer from June 25, 1987 to December 20, 2003.

have engraved his memory upon the hearts of everyone that he touched. We can all be honored to have had the privilege of being touched by Chuck and will always remember him in everything we do."

Steve Pitoniak, Senior Planner, Lackawanna County Regional Planning Commission: "Chuck tried to take a complicated [transportation planning] process and simplified it to get the job done. The proof of that is the LVIH and the upgrades on I-81."

Donna Palermo, President of the Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce had these words to say about Chuck: "We are writing on behalf of our good friend from PENNDOT, Charles, 'Chuck' Mattei. The passing away of Chuck in late December left a great void in his wife and daughter's lives, but has also affected hundreds of more people throughout Northeast Pennsylvania, including the Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce. Anyone who knew Chuck knew him to be a great friend, a dedicated employee and a true family man. He will be sorely missed. Chuck was instrumental in literally every roadway project

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In Remembrance of a Live Well Lived (continued from page 1)

conducted in the Greater Hazleton Area, and assisted the Chamber and area municipal leaders whenever he was called upon. Chuck was certainly no stranger at meetings held at the Chamber office to keep us up-to-date on recommended projects for the area, and to address any concerns or questions we may have had. If Chuck didn't have the answer, he made sure that he found it out and called back within a day or two. He instilled those same practices on his co-workers, and it certainly is making the transition much easier to deal with.

Even though Chuck was going through a difficult time in his life and dealing with multiple treatments, he was still the same old Chuck—upbeat, appreciative of everyone's concern for his health, excited to receive cards and especially thankful for the many phone calls he received. He was surely an example to us all on living life to its fullest! He will surely be missed!

Tom McGeehan, member of the Transportation Committee of the Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Commerce and member of the MPO Transportation Advisory Committee, had these comments about Chuck: "Anyone who knew or worked with Chuck Mattei could not help but admire this remarkable man. I served on the Transportation Committee of the Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Business & Industry for over ten years with Chuck. He was a diligent member, rarely missing a meeting and up until a few years ago, we met every month. He gave the best and most comprehensive reports on PENNDOT's activities

in Northeastern Pennsylvania. I considered him to be the most qualified in his field on the entire committee. He had a wonderful sense of humor and a smile that would light up the room."

Tom Lawson, member of the Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Business & Industry Transportation Committee, and a member of the MPO Transportation Advisory Committee offered these comments: "Chuck Mattei had the ability to create consensus on transportation issues by being himself, not necessarily the District Engineer. His intellect was superior, but his greatest contributions came from within his heart and his desire to do what was best for the public he served so well for 17 years as District Engineer."

Several employees at District 4-0 shared their feelings about their boss:

Mike Cotter, Safety Press Officer: "Chuck was famous for lacrosse at Scranton Prep and was always a gentleman even in high school."

Dave Krisanda, CRC staff: "I remember when Chuck told us the story about the time he and some Notre Dame buddies managed to earn some extra cash by selling beer to thirsty golfers while caddying at a golf course near the University. He always had a good story to share with us."

Construction ADE Dave Scrocki: "When I first met him working on the Cross Valley project, he seemed like a good guy, except that he was from Notre Dame. Our mutual interest in athletics as well as our shared phi-

losophies, except for Notre Dame, made us fast friends."

Steve Shimko, Maintenance ADE: "I never played racquetball with Chuck, but I hope he was a better racquetball player than he was a golfer. He was always trying to get me to go to a hockey game. I was always telling him that hockey and soccer were Communist plots to take over the country."

Rolly Keisling: "Most times he didn't want people to know what his job was. He loved to be just one of the guys. He never wanted me to call him 'Mr. Mattei'. He just wanted to be 'Chuck'. He had the respect of all the people who worked for him."

Mary Schwass, Chuck's Secretary: Speaking about Chuck's unorthodox administrative approach, Mary says, "He was from a less disciplined school of managerial style. He often acted off the cuff. I was amazed by his ability to absorb data. He had a mind like a sponge. I learned from him what the love of serving as a civil servant means."

Adrian Merolli, Executive Director, Luzerne County Planning Commission: "We will all miss having Chuck Mattei involved in our lives and around to help our area progress and grow. He balanced professionalism, common sense, and deep feelings for the safety and well-being of all residents. Those of us on the MPO would love just one more chance to be able to tease Chuck about meetings lasting beyond noon. His passing has left a void in our hearts and minds."

Enhancement Funds Sought For 17 Area Projects

PENNDOT Central Office and the Luzerne and Lackawanna County Planning Commissions received 17 viable applications for enhancement funds for the 2003-2004 round. (Two projects from Luzerne County were deemed ineligible by FHWA.)

At a meeting of the MPO Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) on February 4, the enhancement applicants gave a 5-minute presentation, followed by a 5-minute question and answer period. Based on their prior review of each project and the presentation of the applicants, the TAC scored each project on its merit according to PENNDOT guidelines.

The funding requests for the 17 projects total more than \$5 million. The available funding for those same projects is \$1,396,000, with each County getting \$698,000 - half of that total. Due to funding shortfalls, no TIP money will be available to supplement the enhancement funds for the 2003-2004 round.

The TAC decided to fully fund the top 2 or 3 projects in each County rather than giving each applicant a small amount.

The results of the scoring / ranking and funds distribution for the projects are as follows:

Luzerne County:

Ashmore Pedestrian Bridge, \$210,450;

Hazleton Gateway, \$65,550;
Susquehanna Warrior Trail, \$422,000.
The first two projects are fully funded and the third project received about 80% of the total requested.

Lackawanna County:

Boston & Maine Restoration, \$334,236;
Erie Lackawanna Dining Car Restoration, \$94,890;
Dalton Streamside Trail, \$227,123
Providence Square Redevelopment, Phase II, \$41,751.

The first three projects were fully funded while the fourth received about 15% of the total amount requested.

New Locomotive Engine House for Luzerne County Rail Corp.

The Redevelopment Authority of Luzerne County recently completed the construction of a new 3600 square foot locomotive engine house located at 1 Rutledge Street in Pittston.

The engine house is capable of housing the two existing locomotives owned by the Short Line Railroad Operator, Luzerne & Susquehanna Railway, while providing adequate storage space for equipment, supplies and other vehicles. At the present time, these two current operating locomotives are used to deliver freight cars to existing shippers throughout the county.

The engine house will eventually become the home of a new 1800 horsepower locomotive engine. The new locomotive, purchased by Steve May, President of the Luzerne & Susque-

hanna Railway, will accommodate the ever-growing rail traffic within Luzerne County. According to Robert Connolly, Executive Director of the Redevelopment Authority of Luzerne County, "rail traffic within the County has been growing steadily and will quadruple the 2002-year



Luzerne County Rail Corporation's New Engine House

car count by the end of the 2004-year."

With the new locomotive positioned at the engine house, it will be possible to maneuver the existing two locomotives to strategic locations within the County to provide faster and more efficient freight car movement service to all the existing Luzerne County shippers.

Allen Belles, Assistant Executive Director of the Luzerne County Redevelopment Authority, strongly believes that these improvements, coupled with recent efforts by State Senator Ray Musto in securing \$1 million of state funds to rehabilitate the County railroad lines and bridges, will provide easier trans-loading operations and allow the Luzerne & Susquehanna Railway customer base to increase and provide new employment opportunities for the Luzerne County work force.

Lackawanna County Rail Authority (LCRA) Carloads Increase

Traffic over Lackawanna County-owned rail lines reached record levels in 2003 as an improving economy pushed up demand for everything from flour to propane handled on the tracks.

Carloads shipped by the Delaware-Lackawanna Railroad Company increased more than 15% last year to 7,398 rail cars.

The increased traffic generated record revenues for the LCRA, which owns about 65 miles of track. The LCRA ex-

pects to post gross revenues of \$441,192 in 2003, an increase of about 2.4% over the previous year.

According to Larry Malski, Executive Director of the LCRA, "This trend should continue in 2004 as new businesses are added near LCRA-owned tracks."

Much of the 2003 increase in carloads came from Horizon Milling in Mount Pocono, Keystone Propane in Tobyhanna, and Valley Distributing in South Scranton.

The flour mill transfers in particular added

to the carload count, though the less expensive bulk shipments did not boost County revenues at the same rate.

The LCRA serves about 25 businesses. Cars are taken to and from larger railroads, such as Norfolk Southern and Canadian Pacific. The County owns the former Delaware & Hudson and Delaware Lackawanna and Western rail lines.

(This article was excerpted from an article in the January 13 issue of The Tribune, written by Kenneth Knelly.)

Governor Robert P. Casey Highway Designated as Scenic Byway

Transportation Secretary Allen Biehler announced on January 15 that the Governor Robert P. Casey Highway has been designated as a Scenic Byway.

The highway, formerly known as the Lackawanna Valley Industrial Highway, is a 15-mile, four-lane limited-access highway that extends from the junction with Interstates 81, 84 and 380 near Scranton to the junction with Business Route 6 near Carbondale.

"PENNDOT's decision to designate the Casey Highway as a scenic byway will ensure Pennsylvania's position as the leading destination of motorists in the United States", said Mickey Rowley, Deputy Secretary for Tourism in the Pennsylvania Department of Economic Development. "Pennsylvania's roadways truly enhance the authentic American experience that today's tourists are looking for. Our office will continue to aggressively promote the

Commonwealth's beautiful landscape and dynamic communities."

The Pennsylvania Byways Program allows designated routes to receive federal funding to pay for such improvements as paved shoulders to accommodate bicycles, interpretive signs, and scenic plantings. The designation also limits the type of advertising that may be placed along the highway and gives it special recognition on state maps.

Published By:
Luzerne County Planning Commission

Contact: Nancy Snee

Telephone: 825-1560

FAX: 825-6362

E-Mail:

Nancy.Snee@luzernecounty.org

Check out the PENNDOT District 4-0 web site at
www.neparoads.com

Focus 81 Committee Develops Initiatives To Reduce Congestion and Improve Safety On I-81

Anyone who drives the stretch of I-81 between the Nanticoke Exit in Luzerne County and the Clarks Summit Exit in Lackawanna County knows that this stretch of highway is congested, has a large volume of tractor-trailers, and poses safety concerns. These issues prompted area planners, developers, business leaders, local and state police, emergency services operators, the media, elected officials, PENNDOT and concerned citizens to form the Focus 81 Committee. The Committee was convened in the Spring of 2003 by the Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance (NEPA) to address short, mid and long term initiatives to reduce congestion and improve safety along this 30-mile stretch.

The corridor was designed to accommodate 40,000 vehicles/day (vpd). Recent surveys done by PENNDOT indicate that the volume has increased to 70,000 vpd in certain sections of the corridor. Future projections indicate that traffic volumes could exceed 86,000 vpd by 2010, and 104,000 vpd by 2023.

Widening I-81 to 6 lanes is the long-term solution most people would like to see, but the cost to do so is prohibitive. In March 2003, NEPA submitted a request to U.S. Senator Arlen Specter for funding to assist with the widening project. On May 5, 2003

Senator Specter held a press conference at the Pittston PA 315 Park-n-Ride lot to announce that he would seek funds to widen I-81. Testimony was presented to the State Transportation Commission on October 16, 2003 to have the I-81 widening project placed on the 12-Year Program.

Seeing that the I-81 widening may not happen for several years, Focus 81 has identified several short and mid term measures to help alleviate congestion and speeding on the roadway including the following:

Widen shoulders as part of PENNDOT's summer paving plan;

Develop sites for radar stations and safe areas to pull over drivers;

Install additional signs, warning beacons, and electronic message boards to communicate road conditions and encourage safe driving;

Explore ways to increase turnpike usage;

Enforce truck safety laws by PUC;

Provide area businesses, trucking firms, the media and the public with e-mail updates on traffic volumes, accidents, and weather conditions; and

Host media events such as the American Truck Association "Share the Road" Program.

Future goals of Focus 81 include the following:

Identify resources and secure funds for future initiatives;

Conduct an expanded study to determine how acceptable levels of service can be maintained once I-81 is widened;

Work with the Pennsylvania State Police to increase enforcement efforts; and

Secure designation of the corridor as a "Highway Safety Corridor".



U.S. Senator Specter addresses the media on May 5, 2003