



CONNECTIONS

Carey Avenue Bridge Replacement Project Gets Underway

On February 16, area officials tossed a few ceremonial shovelfuls of dirt to mark the beginning of a massive bridge construction project in Luzerne County.

The new \$27.5 million Carey Avenue bridge will stretch almost a half-mile across the Susquehanna River, linking Hanover Township and Larksville Borough.

District 4-0 Engineer, Chuck Mattei called the new bridge "state-of-the-art." The new span will not only accommodate vehicles, but will also have ample room for pedestrians and a designated bicycle lane, making it a bridge for the 21st century.

Although the existing 2-lane steel bridge was considered an engineering feat when it was built in 1948, it was not built to withstand the traffic volumes nor the heavier vehicles that cross it today. These factors led to a deteriorated beam in 1999 that

closed the bridge to traffic for several weeks until emergency repairs and a thorough inspection were made.

The new bridge is being built on an accelerated design and construction program known as "design-build" whereby the construction contractor designs and builds the structure. Having the same team design and build the bridge leads to a more efficient, and thus, time-saving, process.

The construction contractor for the project is Nyleve Bridge Corporation of Emmaus, PA. The consultant for the preliminary design was Modjeski and Masters, Inc. of Mechanicsburg. Nyleve's consultants for the final design are Patel Chen of Grantville, PA and McTish Kunkel and Associates of Allentown, PA.

The new span will be built upstream of the existing structure on the west side of the river. The east side will be situated near the existing bridge entry in Hanover Township. The length of the new bridge will be almost 2400 feet, consisting of 16 spans made from pre-stressed concrete I-beams and a reinforced concrete deck. It is expected to be completed in 2003.



Rep. Kevin Blaum speaks at the Groundbreaking; on his left, Commissioner Tom Makowski; on his right, District 4-0 Engineer Chuck Mattei.

"JUST SAY NO" TO LITTERING!

While driving to a meeting at the PaDOT District 4-0 Office a few weeks ago, I noticed large amounts of litter along the I-81 on-ramp at Exit 47b. I stopped the conversation I was having in mid-sentence to point out all the litter strewn along the side of the road. My reaction to this sight was disgust at those responsible for creating this mess, and bewilderment at how people can think it's ok to throw their garbage out the windows of their cars! I also wondered if they had any idea of the amount of time, effort, and money it takes to clean up after them.

Cleaning up the mess left behind by others is a task that falls to PaDOT and citizen volunteers. According to Mary Schwass, District 4-0 Anti-Litter Coordinator, the District has three programs geared toward litter clean-up.

Under the Adopt-A-Highway program, which began 11 years ago, vol-

unteers commit to pick up litter on a particular roadway segment 4 times a year for a 2-year period. About 9500 volunteers clean up 1,193 miles of the 3,640 miles of state roads within the District. Over this 11-year period, volunteers have picked up about 106,335 bags of litter.

In addition to this on-going program, the District also sponsors a clean-up program entitled *Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful*, held on the 4th Saturday of April every year. A total of 3,335 volunteers participated in this one-day effort in April of 2000 district wide. Of the many organizations and individuals participating in this program, the Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce readily stands out. Over the past 19 years, the number of volunteers from the Hazleton area has steadily in-

creased. In 2000, the number reached 2,140, or 64% of the total number of volunteers.

The third District litter removal program is the Litter Brigade. This program provides an opportunity for students from the intermediate units to participate in litter clean-up. The students are assigned a specific route to remove litter and are supervised by a group leader.

Besides creating an eyesore, litter clean-up costs a considerable amount of money.

The combined cost to District 4-0 for the Adopt-A-Highway and KPB programs since July of 2000 to the present is approximately \$108,000. For the 1999-2000 fiscal year statewide, \$8.7 million of highway maintenance funds went towards litter clean-up. (Continued on Page 3)

Lackawanna County Rail Authority Steams Ahead

In its fifteen years of existence, the Lackawanna County Rail Authority (LCRA) has experienced continued growth, as measured by the number of carloads carried on its lines. During 1985, the Authority's first year of operation, annual carloads totaled 562. Last year, the total carloads reached 6,014. This represents an almost 10-fold increase. Even over a fifteen-year period, this is quite impressive. According to John Brown, Director of PaDOT's Rail Freight Division, "This type of increase does not happen by accident. These numbers reflect a very aggressive marketing approach and sound management." Mr. Brown credits the LCRA, in particular Executive Director and General Counsel Larry Malski, Esq. for this remarkable feat.

Prior to the formation of the LCRA by the Lackawanna County Commissioners



The Delaware-Lackawanna Railroad 2461 on its way to the Tobyhanna Depot loaded with auto racks of humvees.

in 1985, these vital rail lines were in danger of being liquidated by private sector railroads. If that had occurred, 6,000 jobs would have been lost. Now the rail line serves more than 20 industries who use the 55 miles of rail lines owned by the LCRA, but contracted out to the Delaware-Lackawanna Railroad Company, a private operator. The top 6 in-

dustries served by the LCRA are: Cenex Harvest States Flour Mill, Chamberlain Mfg., Keystone Propane, Brojack Lumber, Seven D Wholesale, and Tredegar Plastics.

Carload numbers are one of the criteria used by PaDOT to determine which agencies will receive grant allocations. Due to the nearly continuous yearly increase in carloads, the LCRA has received substantial state grants that benefit the Authority's rail line, and in turn, its customers. PaDOT recently awarded the Authority a \$300,000 grant that will be used to install new ties and new rail between Scranton and Carbondale. This work will commence in April.

According to Atty. Malski, "The future of the LCRA couldn't look brighter. Based on the analysis of our shippers' forecasts for 2001, we can expect to reach 7100 carloads by the end of the year."

"All Aboard for Stroudsburg, Morristown and New York City!"

It's been many years since that announcement has been made from the tracks of the Lackawanna Railroad in Scranton, but it may not be long until it is heard again.

In 1995, the Lackawanna and Monroe County Planning Commissions completed a study on the feasibility of resuming intercity passenger rail service between Scranton and New York City along the route of the former Lackawanna Railroad mainline.

The resumption will be feasible only if the Lackawanna Cut-Off, a 28-mile right-of-way, is returned to service by replac-

ing the rails that had been removed by Conrail years earlier.

A bi-state coalition consisting of representatives from Lackawanna and Monroe counties in PA, Morris, Sussex, and Warren counties in New Jersey, PaDOT, NJDOT, and New Jersey Transit have been working to secure funds to restore service to the Cut-Off lines.

The state of New Jersey now controls the Cut-Off and should take title shortly. \$160 million of TEA-21 funds will be used to restore these important lines. However, construction cannot begin until the required

Major Investment Study and Environmental Assessment are completed. These are expected to be done by the end of 2001. Construction on the Cut-Off lines should begin in 2002, and resumption of service from Scranton to NYC is expected to occur in late 2003 or early 2004.

At present, 4 trains a day are slated to carry passengers from Scranton to NYC, with travel time expected to be under 3 hours. Copies of the Executive Summary for the Pocono Options Study or any questions on the Scranton to NYC route can be directed to Steve Pitoniak, Senior Planner, Lackawanna County Regional Planning Commission, at 963-6400.

Hazleton Public Transit Purchases Trolley Bus

Hazleton Public Transit (HPT) recently purchased a 27-passenger trolley bus from Chance Coach of Wichita, Kansas. The trolley is 102 inches wide and 29 feet long, and is ADA compliant with a chair lift and room for two wheelchairs on board. The seats are wooden, but have removable cushions.

HPT will put the trolley into service this spring. Initially, it will serve all fixed

routes so that all HPT passengers will have the opportunity to ride it. Eventually, it will have its own designated route in the city of Hazleton. It will also be used for special events.

Anyone having questions on the new trolley can contact Bob Fiume, HPT Executive Director, at 459-5414



Bob Fiume, HPT Executive Director, stands by the new trolley bus that will soon be making its way around Hazleton.

Flowers and Shrubs To Adorn Area Highways

As spring approaches, visions of bright flowers and lush greenery dance in our heads after the long, bleak winter.

The Highway Beautification Subcommittee of the Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Business and Industry's Transportation Task Force (TTF), chaired by Carol Keup of Valley Distributing, is planning to turn those "visions" into reality by planting wildflowers and shrubs along area highways. Their first target area is the median on I-81 between Exits 46 and 47, as well as the Exit 46 on-and-off-ramps leading down to Highland Park Boulevard.

According to Tom Lawson, TTF Chairman, the line of sight is a very important aspect of this project. As southbound motorists turn the corner near Exit 47 or northbound motorists plateau as they approach Exit 46, the Committee wants motorists and passengers to "ooh and aah" at an array of vibrantly-hued wildflowers and other plantings as they drive this stretch of highway.

"We want to make Exit 46 a showplace with the plantings", Mr. Lawson explained. Other areas targeted for beautification are The South and North Crossvalley Expressways, the Back Mountain Corridor, and Route 309 in Mountaintop.

An important part of this effort will be litter pick-up. "All the flowers in the world won't do the trick if they can't be seen because of all the litter". Weeds will also be controlled by spraying the flowers when they are planted with weed repellent. In addition to the Adopt-A-Highway program, Mr. Lawson has suggested using county prisoners to pick up litter. "Perhaps being involved in a project like this will give them a sense of accomplishment and make them feel better about themselves."

Mr. Lawson has already heard from one area landscaping business that wants to donate plantings for the project. Tastefully-designed signs will be erected at the site featuring the businesses and/or other

groups who have a hand in bringing this project to fruition.

The Task Force, in conjunction with the Lackawanna County TTF, has agreed to beautify the I-81 corridor as a regional effort. "We market as a region; we must look like we have our act together."

Anyone wishing to volunteer their services for this project can contact Tom Lawson at 821-1999 or Carol Keup at 654-2403.



Example of how area highways could look in the future

"Just Say No" To Littering (continued from Page 1)

These are funds that could be used to fix potholes, maintain or build roads, but have to be diverted for litter removal.

Late winter/early spring seems to be the time when litter is more noticeable. Snow cover, unlike the ground, provides a smooth surface which litter can blow across easily until it is stopped by a snow fence or other obstruction. When the snow cover melts, large deposits of litter become visible at these points of obstruction.

Littering is a fineable offense listed in both the vehicle and criminal codes. However, enforcement of these codes is difficult, primarily because you must catch the offender in the act. If you see someone littering in the vehicle in front of you and want to report him/her, you must provide the following data to the police: license plate number, make of vehicle, the date and time of day on which the offense took place, and a description of the item thrown out. You cannot move the disposed item from the spot where it was thrown. It must be left there for the police to identify and use as evidence.

Most often, these cases end up in court because the offender simply denies having thrown the object out of his or her car. If the witness is not willing to testify in court, the police will drop the charge due to lack of evidence.

The signs along the highways regarding littering fines indicate that the fine for littering is \$300. Actually, the code states that the fine can range from \$10 to \$300, and, according to Bob Morash the Statewide Highway Beautification Manager for PaDOT, 90% of the offenders end up paying fines on the lower end of the scale. Why? These fines are levied by local magistrates who may know the person being fined and are reluctant to impose more stringent penalties for an offense which is considered minor in nature.

Research done at the national and state levels has identified segments of the population responsible for much of the littering. Nationwide, two groups emerged as the offenders: 16-24 year old males who drive pick-up trucks and senior citizens. People in the first category tend to throw trash in the back of their trucks, and then the trash blows out while they drive.

Senior citizens cited the following three reasons for littering: they were never taught *not* to litter, they paid taxes and had done a lot for the country and thereby earned the right to litter, and if they didn't litter, they would be taking jobs away from PaDOT workers!

In Pennsylvania, the two primary offenders are 16-24-year old males with pick-up trucks in rural areas, and children aged 6 years and up in the urban areas. The results of this re-

search point to a need for educating the public about littering.

Pennsylvania is planning a public relations campaign similar to one used in Texas, where celebrities from the state volunteer their services to appear in public service announcements against littering. This program will hit the airwaves in the spring of 2002. Texas has seen a considerable reduction in litter from their \$5 million public relations effort.

PaDOT and all the volunteers who help clean up our roadways are to be commended. However, I hope there comes a time when their time and efforts can be put to better use—a time when litter removal becomes unnecessary.

In the meantime, if you want to participate in one of District 4-0's litter removal programs, contact Mary Schwass at 963-4010.



Penn State Hazleton Campus students and professor Carl Frankel pick up litter along Stockton Road in Hazle Twp.

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Check out the PaDOT Web Site
at: www.dot.state.pa.us
Click on "regional information"
for updates from District 4-0

Major Project Update: Coal Street—Gateway to Wilkes-Barre

Hailed as the largest roadway project ever undertaken in the City of Wilkes-Barre by Mayor Tom McGroarty, the reconstruction and redesign of Coal Street will provide a direct link from Exit 46 to downtown Wilkes-Barre.

Coal Street has served as an unofficial gateway to downtown Wilkes-Barre for many years. Since development started to occur on Highland Boulevard and Exit 46 opened, Coal Street has experienced increased traffic. Improvements to the road made after the Agnes flood in 1972 were not designed for the heavy traffic flow Coal Street carries today. Consequently, the road has deteriorated to the point where almost daily pothole repairs need to be made.

The proposed improvement plan consists of the following three steps:

1. Reconstruct and re-align Coal Street to Union Street, including new 8-foot sidewalks, curbing, catch basins, traffic lights, historic-style street lights, and pedestrian crossings;
2. Widen and re-surface Wilkes-Barre Boulevard between Scott Street and Market Streets;
3. Improve the railroad between Northampton and Butler Streets, including the removal of the railroad trestle that crosses over Scott Street, and the widening of Scott Street from Wilkes-Barre Boulevard to Pennsylvania Avenue.

These extensive improvements will be undertaken in the following 8 phases:

1. Changing of railroad grade from E. Northampton Street to Butler Street; includes at-grade railroad improvements on Market Street;
2. Removal of railroad trestle on Scott Street;
3. Widening of Scott Street;
4. Extension of Coal Street from Pennsylvania Avenue to Wilkes-Barre Boulevard;
5. Re-alignment of the section of Coal Street between Grant Street and Wilkes-Barre Boulevard to the east; this new section will lie between the detention basin and Coal Street Park;
6. Reconstruction of the existing section of Coal Street from Grant Street to Wilkes-Barre Boulevard, including changes at the intersection with Wilkes-Barre Boulevard; the existing traffic signals will be moved north to the new intersection of Coal St. and Wilkes-Barre Boulevard; the current section of Coal Street from Grant Street to Wilkes-Barre Boulevard will become a local road to accommodate existing residences and businesses; to avoid traffic congestion and/or safety problems at this intersection, only right-hand turns from Coal Street onto Wilkes-Barre Boulevard and from Wilkes-Barre Boulevard onto Coal Street will be permitted;
7. Reconstruction of Coal Street from

Hayes Lane to Fulton Street;

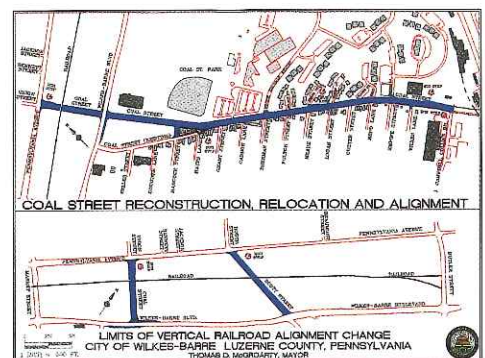
8. Reconstruction of Coal Street from Fulton Street to J. Campbell Collins Drive.

The section of Coal Street from J. Campbell Collins Drive to Route 309 is considered part of the Highland Boulevard/Mundy Street improvement project, currently under construction.

Pennoni Associates has been working on the preliminary design since 1998. This phase of the project is targeted for completion by August 15 of this year.

Construction is expected to start in mid to late 2002. The cost of the Coal Street reconstruction part of the project is approximately \$8 million. The total project cost is approximately \$10.9 million.

For more information, contact Mayor McGroarty's office at 208-4104 or Ron Sturgeon or Larry Fetich, Pennoni Associates at 824-2200.



Schematic of Coal Street project as designed by Pennoni Associates