



New Eighth Street Bridge Project Moving Forward

The construction of the new Eighth Street Bridge (SR 1021) which spans the Susquehanna River, connecting Wyoming Borough and Jenkins Township, will begin this year.

This functionally-obsolete and structurally-deficient bridge will be replaced with a two-lane structure which will have wider lanes and shoulders. Improvements to the intersection of River Road and the bridge will also be done as part of the project. New turning lanes and new traffic signals will be installed, and a portion of River Road will be reconstructed on the Jenkins Township side of the river. Eighth Street in Wyoming Borough will be realigned and reconstructed between the westerly bridge abutment and Susquehanna Avenue.

The new bridge, which is

estimated to cost in excess of \$20 million, will be constructed immediately downstream of the existing structure. Traffic will be maintained on the existing bridge until the new bridge is operational.

The project will span two construction seasons and is a Design-Build project. In a Design-Build project, the Department of Transportation prepares conceptual plans that a contractor finalizes during construction, using a professional design engineer.

The Department will prepare the environmental clearance, purchase all needed Right-Of-Way, provide utility clearance and secure the waterway and erosion/sedimentation per-

mits for the project before bidding.

The contractor will perform final design for the bridge based on the most economical structure design, and the roadway design based on the conceptual plans.

The Department has found the Design-Build process very efficient for large structures. Under this process, a project is bid earlier and completed earlier than it would be under the conventional design method.



Current Bridge and surroundings

2008 MPO Meeting Dates Set

The proposed dates for the MPO Technical and Coordinating Committee meetings for 2008 are as follows:

Technical Committee:

February 20

May 7

July 9

October 15

December 10

Coordinating Committee:

February 27

May 14

July 15

October 22

December 17

All meetings are held at 10:00 am in Conference Room 233 at the PennDOT District 4-0 Office located on the O'Neil Highway in Dunmore, at the entrance to the Keystone Industrial Park.

All meetings are open to the public and are advertised about two weeks prior to each round of meetings in the legal section of the *Citizens' Voice*, the *Hazleton Standard Speaker*, and the *Scranton Times*.

TIP Update: The 2007-2010 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is in the pro-

cess of being updated. The TIP is a four-year document which lists the highway/bridge projects for which funding has been designated.

Like the current TIP, the proposed 2009-2012 TIP will focus on bridge repair and/or replacement.

Once the projects have been finalized and all necessary procedures followed, the proposed 2009 TIP will be put out for public comment. The places at which the document can be viewed will be advertised in the three newspapers mentioned previously.

Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance (NEPA) Partners with PennDOT for Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP)

NEPA has once again partnered with PennDOT to provide the LTAP training series in both the Lackawanna/Luzerne Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) area consisting of Luzerne and Lackawanna Counties, and the NEPA Rural Planning Organization (RPO) area which consists of Carbon, Monroe, Pike and Schuylkill Counties.

The PennDOT LTAP series has been serving Pennsylvania's municipalities with training, on-site technical assistance updates on the latest technologies and innovations, field demonstrations, library and informational materials, and newsletters. These services are available to all municipalities at little or no cost to the user.



Winter Maintenance Class Held in November, 2007 in Pike County

“NEPA is delighted to work with PennDOT through the LTAP Program to assist our counties and municipalities maintain thousands of miles of roadways. By training roadmasters, road crews, and elected officials on the best practices for maintaining our local roads, we can extend the useful lifetime of our transportation infrastructure, and ultimately shift tax dollars

toward other uses,” stated Jeffrey Box, President and CEO of NEPA .

The LTAP training series offers Municipal Road Maintenance & Safety workshops to local government employees including roadmasters, road crews, borough managers, township supervisors, city administrators, municipal authority officials and public works employees. The trainings are also open to employees from industrial development corporations, community associations, engineering firms, and planners when space is available.

The list of available classes is shown below. Contact Ryan McGowan for more information on LTAP at 655-5581.

LTAP Course Schedule

LTAP Courses	Date & Time	Location
Work Zone Traffic Control Roadshow	March 18, 2008 8:00 am - 12:00 pm	Scranton DPW Complex Lackawanna County
Spring Maintenance	April 3, 2008 8:00 am—4:00 pm	Quality Inn, Stroudsburg Monroe County
Unpaved & Gravel Road Maintenance	April 22, 2008 8:30 am-12:30 pm	PPL Environmental Learning Center Pike County
Asphalt: Common Maintenance Problem	May 6, 2008 8:00 am-12:00 pm	Schuylkill Education Center Mahonoy Site, Schuylkill County

Federal Certification Review To Be Held in April

Every three years, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) conduct a certification review of the Lackawanna/Luzerne MPO.

The certification review process is done to determine if the Lackawanna/Luzerne MPO is in compliance with federal transportation planning requirements.

The initial step in the review process is the

submission of several planning documents to FHWA and the FTA for a desk review. Once these documents have been reviewed, FHWA and FTA will issue a desk review finding.

They will then conduct a field review on April 1st and 2nd at which FHWA and FTA representatives will meet with the MPO staff and members of the MPO committees to discuss various aspects of the planning process, such as the development

of the Long Range Plan, the TIP, the Public Participation Plan, etc.

On the morning of April 2, the public will have a chance to meet with the federal representatives to discuss the transportation planning process. The schedule for the certification review has not yet been finalized, but anyone wishing to attend this session should contact either Steve Pitoniak at 963-6400 or Nancy Snee at 825-1564.

Transportation the Focus of Meeting on the Bi-County Comprehensive Plan

Representatives of the consulting firm McCormick Taylor Associates conducted several Focus Group meetings on January 15th and 16th on six major areas of interest in regard to the preparation of the Bi-County Comprehensive Plan.

The session on transportation drew about 35 people representing a wide array of interests. Representatives of the Lackawanna/Luzerne Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), PennDOT District 4-0, the transit operators, environmental groups, economic development organizations and school districts were some of the interest groups in attendance.

The discussion dealt with many topics among which were the following:

Fiscal Constraints: Members of the MPO staff started off the discussion with an explanation of the status of current funding for highway and bridge projects. The MPO receives approximately \$64 million per year for the four - year period. Of that total, 80% must be used for maintenance of the current highway/bridge system, while just 20% can be used for new, capacity-adding projects.

The main emphasis of the current TIP and the 2009-2012 update is bridge rehabilitation or bridge replacement projects. The MPO is dedicated to addressing the large number of bridges that are classified as structurally-deficient.

Alternate Transportation Modes: Representatives from the mass transit operators and the environmental groups advocated for increased use of transit to offset the fiscal constraints of constructing new roads. One person suggested that the MPO transfer all or most of its highway funds to transit to help make transit a more viable means of transportation. Members of the MPO countered that doing so would be irresponsible, since most of the highway funds are going toward maintenance of the current system. The MPO also said that it flexes money to the transit operators when asked to do so.

There was a discussion concerning the rail passenger project and how that could help alleviate the congestion on I-80. Pending approval by the Federal Transit Administration, the project could be operational by 2012.

Rails/Trails: Some environmental advocates stated that, although it is good that trails are developing in this area and are being used by the population, efforts should be made to have the trails used as a means of commuting, rather than for recreational purposes only.

A member of the consultant team said that the Wyoming Valley Wellness Association is studying that issue, and trying to link trails to nursing homes and elderly housing locations to give people better access to facilities such as the Levee Trail. She also mentioned that the West Side Trail in Luzerne County encompasses public streets that wind through 3 - 4 municipalities. Schools are located along those routes so children will have the option of walking to school instead of taking the bus.

The topic of rails/trails also prompted discussion about the potential loss of railroad Right-Of-Ways (ROWS), and that efforts should be taken to prevent that from happening, not only for the development of future trails, but also for the possibility of future passenger rail opportunities between Wilkes-Barre and Scranton.

The issues of bike lanes and sidewalks were brought up during the discussion. Environmental advocates stated that they think there should be bike lanes on all new roadways and sidewalks in all new developments to promote biking/walking as an alternative to driving.

PennDOT representatives stated that bike lanes are considered and implemented, when feasible, on all new roadways. One of the planning commission staff members explained that sidewalks are required in every subdivision/land development ordinance, but that municipalities often waive that requirement when developers balk at the extra cost of providing those amenities.

Transportation/Land Use: The topic of transportation and land use is key to ensuring that de-

velopment occurs where transportation, and other types of infrastructure already exist, thus negating the need to build new roads to accommodate development. This issue is sometimes difficult to accomplish because, for the most part, land use controls lie with local governing bodies. In order for land use/transportation coordination to occur, those entities that control land use must consider the impacts of new development within their boundaries on the overall transportation system before they approve development plans.

As part of the development of the Bi-County Comprehensive Plan, new zoning and subdivision/land development ordinances are being created for Luzerne County. These ordinances are being developed with the concept of *Conservation By Design* principles. *Conservation By Design* is a framework developed by the Nature Conservancy that helps governing bodies determine the best locations for development, recreation and conservation, etc., and provides the best strategies to achieve these goals. The outcome of such a system is the preservation of healthy ecosystems that support people and host the diversity of life on the earth.

The discussion on all these topics lasted about two hours and elicited useful information for the consultant to incorporate into the Bi-County Comprehensive Plan.



Attendees at the Transportation Focus Group session listen to the consultant's presentation.



LACKAWANNA/LUZERNE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

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PennDOT District 4-0 web site: www.neparoads.com

Governor Directs MPO to Focus on Bridges

At a meeting on February 11 in Harrisburg, all Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs) across the state learned that Governor Rendell wants to focus a significant amount of funding on the repair or replacement of Structurally-Deficient (SD) bridges.

To help with this effort, he is allocating \$200 million every year for 10 years in bond money to repair and maintain the Commonwealth's infrastructure.

The Lackawanna/Luzerne MPO will receive approximately \$5 million for the first year. The \$5 million will be added to the funds already being targeted for bridges. This amount will decrease each year, as will the financial goal.

Each MPO/RPO was given a yearly financial goal of funding that must be used for state bridge projects only.

The goal for the Lackawanna/Luzerne MPO is approximately \$43.8 million.

Currently, the MPO has allocated funding in the proposed 2009 TIP for bridge projects including TIP funding and Act 44 funding. Adding the \$5 million in bond money to the existing funding level will still produce a difference of about \$10 million which the MPO must come up with to meet the mandated goal. The only way to do this is to shift funding from other projects to make up the difference.

There are 25,314 bridges in Pennsylvania of which 5,935, or 23.5%, are considered

structurally-deficient. In comparison to neighboring states, Pennsylvania has the highest number of SD bridges by far. The national average of structurally-deficient bridges is 8.4%.

The MPO has a total of 187 SD bridges -71 in Lackawanna County and 116 in Luzerne County.

Based on estimates of every MPO/RPO meeting its bridge funding goals, it is anticipated that the number of SD bridges in the state could decrease to 2,890, or 11.5% in 25 years.

Having the funding for bridge projects is only one aspect of the issue - being able to get projects bid and let is also an important factor.

Some of the project delivery methods being suggested to help expedite bridge repair/replacement projects include: expanding the use of Design-Build contracts; grouping contracts by region and type; continuing to use streamlining design; using Smart Transportation principles; and designing bridges to last for 100 years instead of 50.



PennDOT workers perform a bridge inspection