



Groundbreaking Held for Broad Street Project

The long-awaited Broad Street (PA 93) Corridor Project got underway on December 16, 2010 with an official groundbreaking ceremony. Coordinated by the Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce, the ceremony was held at the intersection of 15th and Broad Streets in West Hazleton Borough. Officials from PENNDOT District 4-0, the Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce, West Hazleton Borough, the City of Hazleton, Luzerne County, representatives of state office-holders, and staff members of Alfred Benesch Consultants, project manager, participated in the groundbreaking.

The 3.5-mile project will provide safety turning lanes, new signalization, new streetlights, and new trees.

Utility work has already begun and demolition of several buildings will occur over the next few months.

Improvements

The project will include the following types of improvements:

Roadway: The roadway will be widened to four lanes and will include additional turning lanes at three intersections. The travel lanes will be 11 feet wide and parking spaces will be widened from 7 feet to 8 feet.

Sidewalks: Brick sidewalks will be removed and replaced with concrete sidewalks throughout the corridor. Downtown sidewalks will be about 8 feet wide and will be placed to the building rather than cut. Sidewalks in West Hazleton Borough will be cut anywhere from 2 to 0 feet. Sidewalks will bulb out at each intersection and serve as a pedestrian safety feature, due to the smaller distance of roadway they create for pedestrians to cross. The bulb-out sidewalks will eliminate some parking spaces,

but parking lots are being incorporated into the project.

All crosswalks will be lined and will have enhanced lighting.

Trees: The trees along the corridor will be removed because many of them are causing sidewalks to buckle. New trees will be replanted at a ratio of 2 to 1, and, unlike the existing trees, will not have roots that protrude upward, and will not have the umbrella effect that prevents businesses from being seen from the street.

Signals: The existing 15 traffic signals along the corridor will be upgraded with new LED equipment, and 2 new signals will be added - one at the entrance of Hazleton General Hospital and the other at the intersection of Broad and Poplar Streets. The timing of the 17 signals will be synchronized to provide an efficient flow of traffic.

Lighting: Decorative street lighting will help eliminate the existing condition of uneven lighting and shadows that impacts the vision of drivers. Due to cost concerns the bases of these new street lights have been scratched, but business owners will have the opportunity to buy the bases. Each pole will have an

electrical outlet near its base which can be used for Christmas lighting or other decorations requiring electricity. A city ordinance will regulate the use of the electricity from the poles making it available only at night.

Other: Other improvements include speed limit signs that will have digital read-outs indicating the speed of drivers.

Walk signals will have audible countdowns to tell pedestrians how much time they have to cross.

New trash receptacles that match the décor of the project will be made by students at the Keystone Job Corps Center in Butler Township. Benches will be added at a later time.

Donna Palermo, President of the Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce, stated that there have been many accidents, and some fatalities, along the corridor, and she hopes the project will help ensure the safety of both drivers and pedestrians. She went on to say that the project is the result of cooperation among governmental and civic agencies.

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Public officials, Hazleton Chamber of Commerce representatives, consultants, and PENNDOT employees participate in the groundbreaking ceremony.

Barry Schoch Selected by Governor for Transportation Secretary Post

Barry Schoch, (pronounced Shoke), P.E., was nominated for the post of Transportation Secretary by Governor Tom Corbett.

Mr. Schoch currently serves as President of the Pennsylvania Highway Information Association and as Vice-President of McCormick Taylor, an engineering/planning consulting firm.

A graduate of Penn State University, Mr. Schoch began his career with the Delaware Department of Transportation and then worked for two private sector firms before joining McCormick Taylor in 1995.

In conjunction with the PA Turnpike Commission, he led the effort by PENNDOT to toll I-80. Nancy Snee, MPO Coordinator for Luzerne County, commented, "Barry's involvement with this project, and the work he has done with and for PENNDOT, will serve him well when it comes to dealing with the transportation funding challenges the Commonwealth faces." The lack of adequate fund-



Barry Schoch, Transportation Secretary Nominee

ing has severely reduced the number of new construction projects, and has prompted PENNDOT to focus its financial resources on maintaining the existing roadway and bridge system.

In a recent article in *Highway Builder* magazine, Mr. Schoch addressed this issue, saying that the transportation industry faces many challenges in the next several years, beginning with solving the transportation funding issue. He further said that the solution is to develop and promote a vision "that will generate interest and enthusiasm" among the public, the news media and policymakers which will create an environment in which elected officials will allocate adequate resources for all modes of transportation.

Schoch has over 28 years of experience in the engineering field and has either managed or played a key role in many of the pending or completed transportation projects in the state.

He was also instrumental in improving PENNDOT's approach to project development, context-sensitive design, and training for environmental quality efforts.

Mr. Schoch is married and lives in Camp Hill.

PENNDOT Announces Smart Transportation Recipients

PENNDOT awarded \$24.7 million in Pennsylvania Community Transportation Initiative (PCTI) funding to 41 applicants in early January.

The Department received 238 applications requesting more than \$175 million in funding from municipalities, MPOs, RPOs, transit agencies, and advocacy groups statewide. The list of successful projects support local economic development, encourage walk-able, multimodal, mixed-use development, improve re-

gional connectivity, or enhance the existing transportation network.

Two local municipalities and one regional authority from the Lackawanna/Luzerne MPO region were among the 41 successful applicants.

The Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority will receive \$459,000 to remedy safety issues for pedestrians and bicyclists using the Lackawanna River Heritage Authority Trail in Archbald Borough.

Kingston Township will receive \$300,000 to complete a 2-mile multi-use trail between Luzerne Borough and the Trucksville section of Kingston Township.

West Wyoming Borough will receive \$295,400 to improve walk-ability along the West Side Trail.

The applicants will be reimbursed after construction work has been completed.

For more information on the PCTI program, go to www.smart-transportation.com.

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To oversee and manage the project, PENNDOT District 4-0 has opened an office in the Markle Building.

Pat Fritsky, PENNDOT project manager, stated that there will be an open-door policy, and anyone having questions about the project will be able to come in and have their questions answered.

The project was bid on September 30, 2010. The Notice to Proceed occurred on

December 10, 2010 and major construction will begin in March of this year. Penny Supply (Slusser Brothers) is the contractor for the \$27.4 million project which is anticipated to be completed by late 2013.

(See www.neparoads.com for more information on this and other projects.)

**Project View,
Looking North on Broad Street**



Luzerne County Bridge Preservation Project Saves \$ Millions

Luzerne County Bridge #54706, located on Mill Mountain Road in Butler Township, is a single-lane, wrought-iron pony truss structure that was constructed in 1883. The structure, which traverses Nescopeck Creek, had been posted with a weight restriction of 3 tons due to design, age, and condition.

As a result of a National Bridge Inspection Standards (NBIS) report in October of 2009, a determination was made that the deck superstructure and bridge abutments had significantly deteriorated to the point where the bridge had to be closed to the public.

Upon inspection by the Luzerne County Engineering Office, the staff noticed that the truss was in good condition, and would not have to be replaced. The engineering staff recommended to the county commissioners and PENNDOT that the entire deck super-

structure be replaced and that substantial abutment rehabilitation be done. Upon agreement from the commissioners and PENNDOT, the engineering office staff proceeded to design and procure the new steel structural steel that was fabricated to replicate the existing deck steel. The new steel was chemically treated to resist corrosion, and was installed following completion of the abutment work. The final phase of the work involved installation of the new plank deck, new guiderail supports, and new signage.

The cost to rehabilitate the bridge was \$26,390. If the bridge had been replaced, the cost would have been over a million dollars. This cost savings freed up funding that can now be applied to other larger bridge projects within the MPO region.

Following another FBIS inspection, it was determined that the closure conditions had

been adequately mitigated, and the bridge re-opened to traffic on December 22, 2010. While the bridge remains a single-lane, weight-restricted structure, it meets the needs of the local public users.



Rehabilitated County Bridge #54706

Gas Tax Factoids

There are three types of taxes motorists in Pennsylvania pay every time they fill their tanks - a federal gas tax, a state gas tax, and the Oil Company Franchise Tax (OCFT).

The federal gas tax is established by federal law and has been set at 24.4 cents per gallon since 1993. Since then, it has lost about a third of its purchasing power due to inflation.

Pennsylvania established a flat tax in 1931. This flat tax has undergone many changes over the years, but has remained at 12 cents per gallon since 1983. Like the federal gas tax, the state gas tax has also lost significant

purchasing power over the last 28 years. The monies raised from this tax are directed to the Motor License Fund and the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund.

The OCTF was established in 1981 and is re-calculated annually. It is based on the average wholesale price of fuel and is assessed on all fuels used, or sold and delivered, by distributors within the state. The formula to determine this tax is set in state law. It was increased in 1983, 1991, and 1997, but has not increased since then.

This tax is used to fund the majority of the state's highway and bridge construction

projects and the maintenance program.

Pennsylvania also has an Underground Storage Tank Indemnification Fund which adds 1.1 cents to each gallon of regular and diesel fuel.

The total amount of Pennsylvania gas taxes totals 32.3 cents per gallon. Adding in the federal gas tax, the total comes to 50.7 cents.

For diesel fuel, the total state tax amounts to 39.2 cents per gallon. Adding the federal gas tax brings that total to 63.6 cents per gallon.

Long Range Transportation Plan Under Review

The draft Lackawanna-Luzerne Regional Plan, an integrated Bi-County Comprehensive Plan and Long Range Transportation Plan, recently underwent an intensive in-house review by the Luzerne and Lackawanna Counties planning commission staffs.

The planning commission staffs met recently with the consultant to discuss their comments on the draft plan and their suggested revisions. Once the planning

commission staffs and the consultant have come to an agreement regarding the recommended revisions and those revisions have been made, the revised plan will be made available to the MPO committees, the comprehensive plan steering committee, and the public for their review and comment.

Being a combined plan, the Regional Plan will need to be approved by the

MPO, the Federal Highway Administration, and the county commissioners of both counties. The Long Range Transportation Plan aspect of the plan will be reviewed by PENNDOT District and Central Office staff as well.

Once all parties have approved the plan, the implementation process will begin. Approval of the plan is expected to occur by the end of June, 2011



**LACKAWANNA LUZERNE METROPOLITAN
PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

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PENNDOT District 4-0 website:

www.neparoads.com

Trail Workshop To Be Held in Scranton on February 17th

The Northeastern Pennsylvania Trails Forum will hold a workshop on Thursday, February 17, 2011 at the Scranton Cultural Center at the Masonic Temple, located at 420 N. Washington Avenue in Scranton. Registration and refreshments begin at 8:00 AM, and the workshop will run from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM. The registration fee is \$25, and includes meals, materials, and a walking tour.

Presented by the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority (LHVA) and Heritage Valley Partners, Inc., the workshop will bring together leaders in trail development to discuss key issues. Workshop sessions will focus on the development of a regional trails system, marketing and promoting trails to the public, and working with volunteers. Representatives from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources will be available to meet with participants about available funding for trail projects, as well as mapping for the state trail website, [ww.explorepatrails.com](http://www.explorepatrails.com).

The workshop will also offer complimentary walking tours of the Downtown Scranton

Riverwalk, the newest section of the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail, or of the Scranton Cultural Center.

The workshop is open to all organizations, governmental entities, or individuals who are developing or maintaining trails in Northeastern Pennsylvania. These include recreational trails, mountain biking or snowmobile trails, parks or municipal trails, water trails, or trails on public or private lands. Representatives from trail users groups, municipalities and governmental agencies, civic organizations, professional firms, land owners and land managers, as well as individuals, are welcome to attend.

Pre-registration for the workshop is required. The deadline to register is Tuesday, February 15, 2011. Payment will be accepted the morning of the event.

For more information on the workshop, directions or how to download a registration form, visit www.LHVA.org and click on NEPA Trails Forum, or contact Stephanie Milewski, RLA, LHVA Trail Manager

and Environmental Program Officer, at smilewski@LHVA.org, or by telephone at 570-963-6730, Extension 8203.

The Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority, a National and State Heritage Area, works with partners on projects that conserve, preserve, and educate the public about the region's historic, cultural, economic, and natural resources. Heritage Valley Partners, Inc., is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit development affiliate of LHVA which supports the mission, projects, programs, and events of the LHVA.

Information submitted by Colleen Carter, Development & Marketing Officer, LHVA. Colleen can be reached at 963-6730, Extension 8211.

If you would like to receive the newsletter electronically, please send me your e-mail address. (MPO Committees are exempt from this request).