

TRANSFORM



WINTER 2018

PennDOT Seeks Collaboration with Municipalities Early in Transportation Planning Process

PennDOT Connects is a new way of thinking about transportation project planning and development. In short, it's about engaging local government consistently and more deeply than ever before — actively considering local input as a project is being considered for inclusion in a Long Range Transportation Plan or the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Key to PennDOT Connects' success is a shared understanding of what could go into a local transportation project that would add to a community's safety, modes of getting around, and community character or planned growth.

Under this initiative, PennDOT wants host communities to look at projects for roads and all modes of transportation as assets, not liabilities, to their communities.

It all starts with planning. PennDOT districts need to find out how a community envisions its development over the next five to 20 years. What plans are in place? What are the opportunities for pedestrian and bicycle improvements, freight movement, multimodal connections, green infrastructure, and better stormwater management?

(continued on page 2)

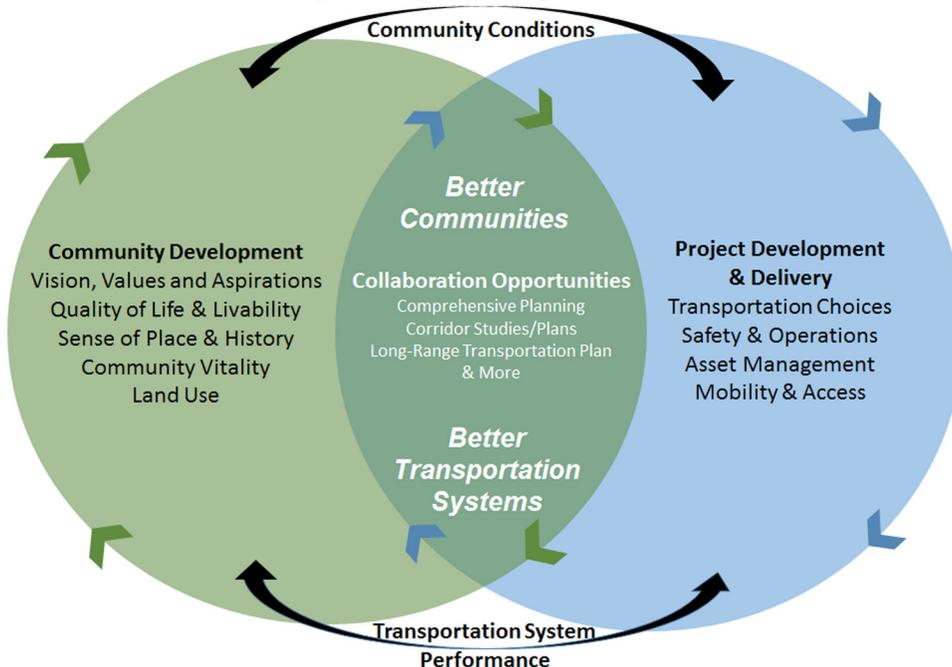
How can PennDOT Connects help your community?

Learn about this new approach to project planning and provide your feedback on tools that will make PennDOT Connects work for your community.

Sign up for a municipal workshop near you.

[WORKSHOP SCHEDULE](#)
See page 3

Planning & Engineering Collaboration



This graphic shows how municipal responsibilities for community development (left) can dovetail with PennDOT responsibilities for project development & delivery (right). The overlapping section (middle) lists some of the collaboration opportunities to make this happen.



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- Upcoming Workshops
- PennDOT Connects Support HUB
- District 9 Spotlight
- Meet District 9 Planner
- Featured Project: Blair County



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PennDOT Seeks Collaboration

From here forward, PennDOT districts will be equipped with the tools and training to provide opportunities for local involvement. They will strive to ensure that this involvement starts at the beginning as projects are being evaluated for Long Range Transportation Plans or the TIP, during preliminary engineering and environmental scoping, and during project delivery.

For effective collaboration to occur under this initiative, engineers are learning more about community planning (municipal and county) and planners from regional planning organizations (MPOs/RPOs) are learning more about project planning and engineering. Each perspective impacts the other. Likewise, local governments will have opportunities to learn how the transportation planning process works and how they can be involved (*see article on page 3 about upcoming workshops*).

Early collaboration essentially means paying attention to what is in local and county plans, which can encompass many goals — bike-ped improvements, bridge replacement priorities, improved connectivity, a new “complete streets” policy, or transit-oriented guidelines. The connections to transportation planning are many.

Such collaboration can take different forms. Meetings, phone calls, emails, and impromptu discussions will help reveal these connections during the pre-TIP for capital improvements, as well as county planning for maintenance projects. PennDOT recognizes that projects vary in complexity and that rural and urban communities vary in staff capacity and availability, so the process for engagement is a flexible one.

Once a project is added to the Long Range Transportation Plan or the TIP, local collaboration grows more focused.

COMMON GOALS

accommodating growth

improving mobility & efficiency

funding maintenance

encouraging multi-modal transportation

improving community character

improving safety

At a minimum, projects approved for the TIP require that PennDOT document related planning elements using a new Project Initiation Form (PIF). This deliberate effort to document local input helps project managers gain a better understanding of issues that are important to the community.

Subsequent project scoping and preliminary engineering will fully consider community vision, needs, goals, and objectives with additional opportunities for public involvement depending on the scope of the project. That’s not to say that all local recommendations will be accommodated, but under PennDOT Connects, all input will be objectively evaluated and decisions documented for future consideration.

Ultimately, transportation projects will be delivered that improve safety, mobility, access, and environmental outcomes for all modes of transportation and become true community assets.

PennDOT and its Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Rural Planning Organization (RPO) planning partners have a long-standing relationship jointly preparing transportation studies, plans, and programs to make the best transportation project investments possible with available resources.

This strategic alliance is now of even greater importance for PennDOT Connects implementation. Together, the MPO/RPO planning partners and PennDOT can effectively collaborate and communicate with municipalities — and other community stakeholders (e.g., transit operators, economic development agencies, etc.) — to improve transportation system performance and achieve more livable communities.

The collaborative effort of municipalities, MPO/RPO planning partners, and PennDOT is key to ensuring that opportunities to improve transportation and communities are realized. For contact information for PA’s MPOs and RPOs: <http://www.penndot.gov/ProjectAndPrograms/Planning/Pages/MPO-and-RPO-Contact-List.aspx>.

Municipal Outreach Sessions: An Opportunity to Share Your Ideas about PennDOT Connects

A meaningful opportunity for engagement under the PennDOT Connects initiative is about to come your way. Secretary of Transportation Leslie S. Richards invites municipal administrators, planners, engineers, public works directors — anyone involved in your transportation projects — to attend one of more than 30 upcoming workshops to discuss how PennDOT Connects can help your community.

These two-hour sessions will introduce the PennDOT Connects policy, collaboration opportunities among planning partners, and implementation plans by PennDOT districts.

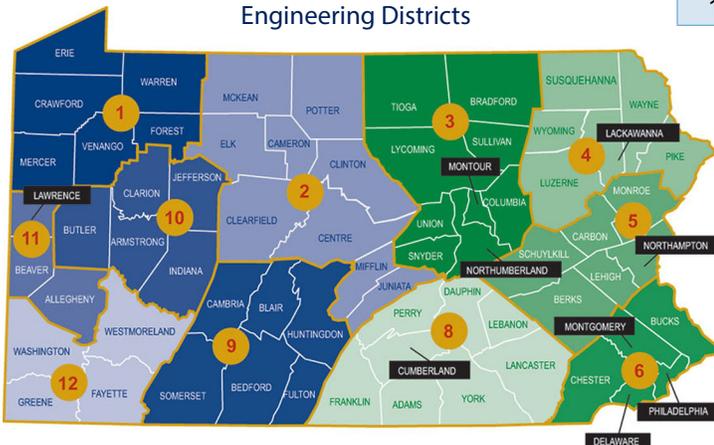
Most importantly, these sessions are designed to gather feedback from municipal representatives about the support necessary to make PennDOT Connects a success. For example, do you need a better understanding of how transportation project scopes are developed? What areas of technical assistance and training would be most valuable? How can shared information about anticipated transportation projects help your municipality better plan for sewer, water, and other infrastructure initiatives?

PennDOT Connects is an opportunity to be heard and to improve transportation projects in ways that may have not been considered before or were recognized too late in the project delivery process.

Let PennDOT know how your community vision, needs, and goals/objectives can be integrated into transportation planning and design by attending a workshop near you.

District	Location ID	Date	Time
1-0	Erie	March 21, 2018	9 AM
1-0	Oil City	March 21, 2018	2 PM
1-0	Hermitage	March 22, 2018	9 AM
2-0	Ridgway	March 20, 2018	9 AM
2-0	Coudersport	March 20, 2018	2 PM
2-0	Clearfield	March 6, 2018	9 AM
2-0	Lewistown	March 6, 2018	2 PM
3-0	Towanda	March 27, 2018	9 AM
3-0	Montoursville	March 27, 2018	2 PM
3-0	Lewisburg	March 16, 2018	2 PM
4-0	Honesdale	March 26, 2018	9 AM
4-0	Dunmore	March 26, 2018	1 PM
5-0	Stroudsburg	March 16, 2018	9 AM
5-0	Allentown	February 27, 2018	1 PM
5-0	Leesport	February 28, 2018	1 PM
6-0	Doylestown	February 27, 2018	9 AM
6-0	West Chester	February 28, 2018	9 AM
6-0	King of Prussia	March 13, 2018	1 PM
8-0	Enola (Harrisburg)	January 24, 2018	1 PM
8-0	Lancaster	February 21, 2018	9 AM
8-0	Lebanon	February 21, 2018	1 PM
8-0	Chambersburg	March 7, 2018	9 AM
8-0	Dallastown (York)	March 7, 2018	2 PM
9-0	Bedford	February 16, 2018	9 AM
9-0	Hollidaysburg	February 16, 2018	1 PM
9-0	Ebensburg	February 15, 2018	1 PM
10-0	Butler	March 22, 2018	1 PM
10-0	Indiana	February 15, 2018	9 AM
11-0	Pittsburgh	March 2, 2018	9 AM
11-0	Bridgeville	March 2, 2018	1 PM
12-0	Washington	March 1, 2018	1 PM

Pennsylvania Department of Transportation Engineering Districts



To register:
 WEBSITE: paconnects.org
 and select WORKSHOPS
 PHONE: 717-710-2090

PennDOT Connects Support Hub: Your One-Stop Shop for Municipal Training and Resources

The PennDOT Connects Support Hub — paconnects.org — is a web-based, interactive helpdesk created to help municipalities obtain technical assistance (tech assists) from a PennDOT Connects expert via on-site visits, phone, or email support. The Support Hub also provides self-service options to access technical resources and guidance documents related to the PennDOT Connects program and policy, as well as electronic news updates.

WHO CAN USE THE HUB?

The Support Hub's online self-serve resources are available to anyone. Municipal officials and their staff or collaborators are eligible to request and receive PennDOT Connects tech assists. Any general users of the Support Hub who choose to register for an account may subscribe to the HUB News, a good way to stay in touch with the PennDOT Connects initiative via updates to your email inbox.

REGISTRATION

Registration is easy and signs you up to receive the latest news and information about PennDOT Connects. Announcements about new resources, upcoming training, and the latest newsletter will be sent to registered users. Don't miss out on the opportunity to stay up-to-date on current PennDOT Connects news.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

A Tech Assist request is initiated by submitting a ticket through the Hub. You will be guided through a short series of prompts to specify the nature of your request and desired level of assistance (phone, email, or on-site visit). If you have supporting documentation that helps to describe your issue, you can choose to include attachments with the ticket, as well. Requests are then reviewed and assigned to technical experts to provide timely feedback for meaningful support and recommendations.

KNOWLEDGEBASE

Use the searchable Knowledgebase to find resources shared by PennDOT and partnering agencies and organizations. Simply type in a topic or keyword in the search bar, and a list of related resources, including short articles, and reference guides are listed with attached documents you can download to your desktop. The Support Hub library also includes PennDOT Connects outreach and training materials, as well as resources shared by land use, transportation, and planning partners.

What kind of assistance can I ask for?

Technical assistance is designed to develop flexible ways to meet local government's land use and transportation needs by providing practical advice on how to best integrate planning and add efficiency to the project delivery process.

Any question or technical assistance request related to land use planning and transportation projects is fair game.

A few examples:

What is the best way to maintain great neighborhoods while accommodating growth?

How do we moderate driving behavior on state routes that are within our neighborhoods where children walk to school?

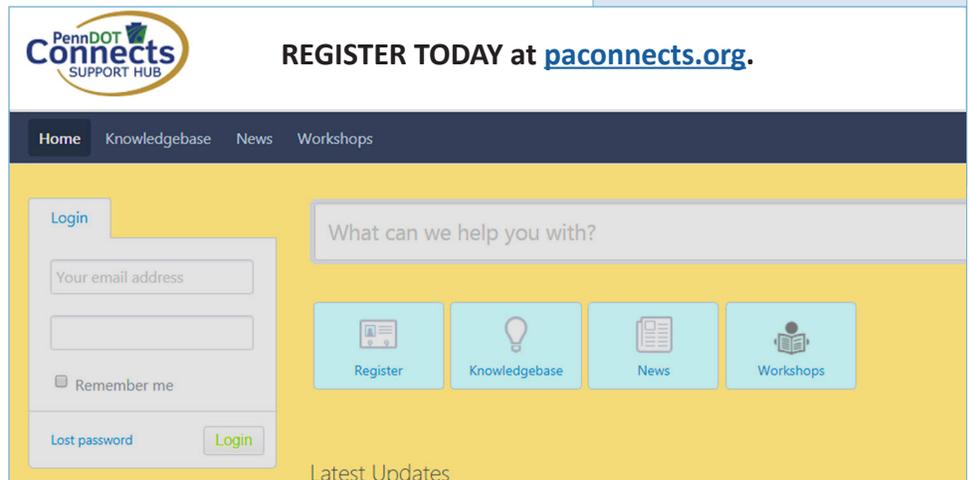
We need help in developing a funding strategy for upgrades to our curb and sidewalks.

What techniques can be used to manage growth around a planned highway interchange?

SUBMITTING A GOOD TICKET

When submitting a ticket, follow these tips:

- ▶ Tailor your request to one or two specific topic areas. If you have multiple topics, open additional tickets.
- ▶ In the description, provide contact information for any key individuals or collaborators that are already working with you on the issue, including other municipalities, MPO/RPO staff, or consultants.
- ▶ Upload photos/documents that help to support or clarify your request.



REGISTER TODAY at paconnects.org.

Visit the Hub today to explore a new free resource to assist municipalities with transportation planning and creating a vision for their communities.

REGIONAL NEWS

District 9 Engages Municipalities in the Planning Process

If your municipality is located within PennDOT District 9 (Cambria, Blair, Huntingdon, Somerset, Bedford, and Fulton counties), then you may already be familiar with how PennDOT Connects plans to change the way transportation projects are developed under the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) process. Over the past year, District 9 leadership recognized the value of communicating with its municipalities earlier in the project development process and started to implement this new way of doing business with the 2017 TIP.

“We saw it as an opportunity to get more information,” says Jim Pruss, District 9 Portfolio Manager, “so that we have a better understanding of a project’s scope, the priority to the community, and what the issues are going to be as we deliver it through the project delivery process.”

District 9 began looking at projects in more detail as part of a visioning process reinstated as an enhancement to the PennDOT Connects system — its team of district staff would field view some of the projects under consideration for the TIP and reach out to the district’s RPO, MPOs, and county planners.

“The only real difference is that we didn’t go to the municipal level (before PennDOT Connects),” explains Anne Stich, District 9 Planner. While the district had always advertised the draft TIP and provided an opportunity for municipalities to comment, it had never aggressively pursued municipal input.

“We’re taking it a step further,” explains Pruss, “and reaching out to municipalities and trying to get them to come to the table so we can actually document their concerns.”

Documenting municipal input is a big part of PennDOT Connects policy. The tool used to solicit and document that input from municipalities is called the Project Initiation Form, a new tool under PennDOT Connects.

“Whenever we would reach out before, we would make note of their comments,” says Pruss, “but we didn’t ask them specific questions. This form makes sure we ask.

“We make one promise when we meet a municipality — that we will listen and consider everything they tell us. We can’t promise that we’re going to do everything they ask, but we will consider everything. Once we get to the point of what we call the Design Field View submission, roughly the middle of project development, we reach out to municipalities and do followups.”

PennDOT staff documents the entire process to explain why or why not certain elements are included in final designs.

Three years ago, District 9 saw the need to add planning expertise to its staff ranks. Meet Anne Stich, the first person to hold such a planning role.



Stich brings multiple perspectives to the table. She spent five years as a transportation program manager for Southern Allegheny RPO and prior to that groomed her planning know-how as a county and regional planner.

When she joined District 9, PennDOT did not have an official game plan to hire planners in PennDOT districts. Under PennDOT Connects, Secretary Richards made it a priority to have planners in all districts to help implement the program's initiatives.

“PennDOT Connects is a new way of looking at projects,” says Stich. “We always looked at it as a fluid, changing process. It’s important to continue to evaluate the process as it will change over time.”

For now, says Stich, she wants municipalities to understand that there is a benefit for them to participate in these meetings and outreach. “Whether it’s a phone call or a meeting with District 9, there’s a lot of value,” says Stich. “It’s not us just checking off a box. We really are interested in what municipalities want to talk about. It’s an opportunity for them to get improvements or small changes into projects that potentially wouldn’t have happened otherwise.”

“So far the requests have been very reasonable,” adds Pruss. “Sometimes we can’t implement an idea due to the parameters of the project or environmental impacts, but at least we document the input, and if a future opportunity presents itself, then we’ll have it documented.”

Pruss also notes that there are times when a municipality rejects a design element, such as a bike path or sidewalk, because of the costs associated with maintenance. Better to have that information up-front than to put the project under contract and have to pull a design feature late in the game.

Municipal reactions have been positive so far. According to Pruss, the majority of municipalities were very receptive and appreciated PennDOT’s efforts to reach out to them and open a dialogue much earlier in the process.

FEATURED PROJECT

Project Scope Expands to Accommodate Pedestrians

A recent project in Blair County exemplifies the philosophy of PennDOT Connects. The initial scope of this project involved replacing a bridge over a small stream near the busy intersection of Whittier Avenue in the City of Altoona and Logan Township. It evolved into a project that now moves pedestrians safely about the commercial strip.

During the development of the project, District 9 collaborated with both municipalities to incorporate pedestrian accommodations along the intersection, which was part of the Plank Road Pedestrian Access Study completed by the Altoona Metropolitan Planning Organization in 2012.

Construction on the project was completed in Fall of 2016. Both municipalities signed sidewalk maintenance agreements.



BEFORE



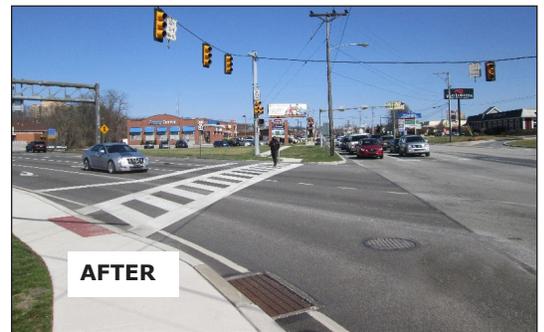
AFTER

SR 1001 (PLANK ROAD/PLEASANT VALLEY BOULEVARD)

District 9 worked with the City of Altoona and Logan Township, Blair County, to add pedestrian features to a project that was initially limited to a nearby bridge replacement. Sidewalks were constructed along both sides of Route 36 (Union Avenue) between the bridge and SR 1001 (Plank Road), as well as along the western side of Plank Road.



BEFORE



AFTER

ROUTE 36 (UNION AVENUE) AND SR 1001 (PLANK ROAD/PLEASANT VALLEY BLVD.)

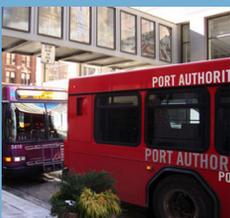
A pedestrian signal and crosswalks at this intersection were also included in the project. Both municipalities signed sidewalk maintenance agreements.



Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
 Web: paconnects.org
 Email: PAConnects@pa.gov
 Phone: 717-710-2090



Transportation Planning: Connecting with Community Priorities



Mobility & Efficiency



Multimodal Transportation



Safety



Community Character



Project Funding



Accommodating Growth