

BETTER COLLABORATION

TRANSFORM

BETTER COMMUNITIES

The latest news and information from PennDOT Connects' network of people and places



SPRING 2018

Municipal Input Helps to Shape PennDOT Connects



Workshop participants showed considerable interest in taking advantage of PennDOT Connects for their communities. They shared their opinions, concerns, and suggestions about upcoming training and technical assistance opportunities now available.

More than 1,000 municipal representatives and planning partners attended 33 outreach workshops that were held recently throughout Pennsylvania to explain the PennDOT Connects process. Announced in 2016, PennDOT Connects is a policy launched by Secretary of Transportation Leslie S. Richards to enhance the department's engagement with municipalities in transportation project planning, design, and delivery.

The large number of workshop participants alone reflects municipalities' willingness to work collaboratively with the department. Participants weighed in on how this initiative can improve transportation planning as it relates to local communities' visions and priorities.

When polled, an impressive 88.74 percent of participants indicated that they were likely or very likely to use PennDOT Connects technical assistance in the next two years.

Tremendous feedback was provided regarding topics where expert advice and collaboration would be most beneficial. (See chart on right for top ranked areas of technical assistance

needs.) PennDOT will use the input provided by participants as new training and technical assistance resources are developed under the PennDOT Connects program.

For instance, a new course called Planning and Engineering 360° for municipalities is being developed to familiarize local government officials with the planning and

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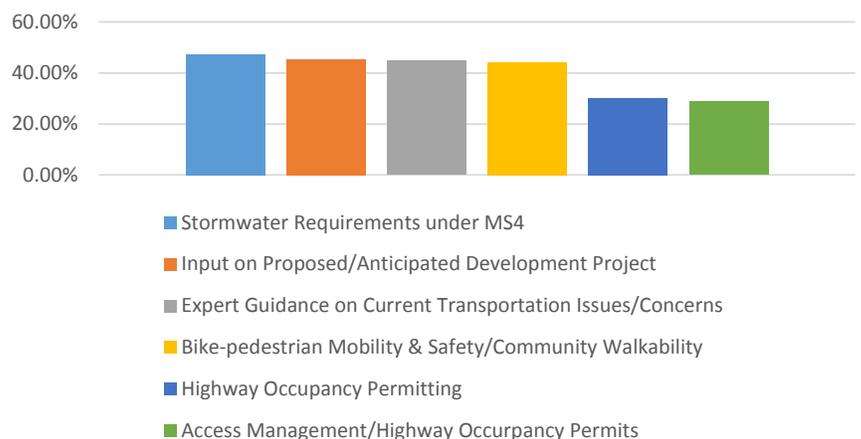
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Top Ranked Areas of Technical Assistance Needs



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Municipal Workshops

engineering disciplines. In addition, participants will have a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities in the transportation project development and delivery process.

Of its three modules — the Value of Planning, Program Development, and Project Delivery — Program Development was selected as the area of greatest interest by nearly half of the workshop participants.

Training modules are also in the works and will be developed as either audiovisual resources or presentation materials to address topics under PennDOT Connects' six core categories: community character, multimodal travel, accommodating growth, funding, mobility and efficiency, and safety.

PennDOT extends its appreciation to all those who participated in this series of workshops and greatly values all input shared by municipal and planning partners. The department encourages all municipal representatives to take advantage of the training and technical assistance offerings under the PennDOT Connects program.

If you have not yet done so, please register at the PennDOT Connects Support Hub at paconnects.org.

Collaboration Opportunities

PennDOT Connects policy and outcomes depend on the quality of local and regional collaboration in the process. To reach common goals, collaboration...

- ∞ becomes a routine element of PennDOT's process;
- ∞ provides the opportunity for details unique to communities to be identified and discussed; and
- ∞ takes place prior to developing project scopes

Looking for a Resource on Pedestrian and Bicycle Connectivity?

At the National Bike Summit on March 5, the Federal Highway Administration announced the publication of a new resource, Measuring Multimodal Network Connectivity.

The resource focuses on pedestrian and bicycle network connectivity and provides information on incorporating connectivity analysis into state, metropolitan, and local transportation planning processes.



It describes five core components of pedestrian and bicycle network connectivity, including network completeness, network density, route directness, access to destinations, and network quality. It outlines a five-step process and highlights methods and measures to support a variety of planning decisions.

The guidebook can be found at www.fhwa.dot.gov.

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

This strategic alliance is now of even greater importance for implementing PennDOT Connects. 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.

Municipalities, MPO/RPO planning partners, and PennDOT must collaborate to ensure that opportunities to improve transportation and communities are realized. MPO/RPO contacts can be found at:

<http://www.penndot.gov/ProjectAndPrograms/Planning/Pages/MPO-and-RPO-Contact-List.aspx>.

Q&A Session with Secretary Richards



Recognizing transportation's role in connecting communities and supporting economic development, Pennsylvania's Secretary of Transportation Leslie S. Richards encourages municipalities to embrace PennDOT Connects, a new approach that will enhance local engagement and improve transportation project planning, design, and delivery.

PennDOT Connects expands the department's requirements for engaging municipalities and planning partners by requiring collaboration with stakeholders before transportation project scopes are developed.

"We know that transportation plays a huge role in community identities and economies, and we take our responsibility as stewards of the system very seriously," Richards says. "Through PennDOT Connects, we're putting innovation, local resources, and strong partnerships to work so we can have the most sustainable, inclusive transportation assets possible."

PennDOT Connects aims to transform capital and maintenance project development by ensuring that community collaboration happens early and that each project is considered in a holistic way for opportunities to improve safety, mobility, access, and environmental outcomes for all modes and local contexts. Earlier collaboration will ensure that projects meet current and projected needs as much as possible and can reduce costly changes further in the project development process.

Q: Where did your passion for planning originate?

Before I became secretary at PennDOT, a county commissioner, or a township supervisor, I was a project manager at a civil engineering firm. My job was to help

plan infrastructure projects for communities of all shapes and sizes, and it is something I love to do. A well-planned community sustains a high quality of life for residents, promotes economic development, and is conscientious of the local environment. Transportation planning can strongly impact the way a community operates. My planning background is one reason why I'm so excited about the PennDOT Connects initiative.

Simply put, PennDOT Connects means we are going to become better planners — talking to our partners at the local, county, and regional level earlier in the process so that we can hopefully deliver what the community truly feels is an asset and really fits in the fabric of the neighborhood.

Q: How does PennDOT Connects improve upon past practices?

In the past, we would get through a good chunk of design for a project, and something would come up when talking to our partners — the township wants a pedestrian walkway or the borough new streetlights — and it could ultimately affect our project delivery. With PennDOT Connects, we should avoid some of these surprises. And while we won't be able to accommodate every request, we'll end up with more inclusive projects.

We want every project to be considered in a holistic way to look for opportunities to improve safety, mobility, access, and environmental outcomes for all modes of transportation, including bicycles, pedestrians, and transit. Earlier collaboration will ensure that projects meet current and projected needs as much as possible and can reduce costly changes further in the project development process.

Q: How will municipalities be made aware of the PennDOT Connects policy?

My talented team has already begun implementing PennDOT Connects on projects that are on the Transportation Improvement Program but haven't yet begun preliminary engineering or just recently started the process.

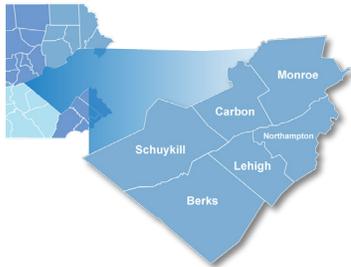
In addition, a series of 33 workshops were held across the commonwealth over this past winter. The objectives of the Municipal Outreach Workshops were, first and most importantly, to encourage leadership for the PennDOT Connects initiative in each community. We also introduced the policy, discussed how it is being implemented by local PennDOT Districts and Metropolitan or Rural Planning Organizations (MPO/RPO), and finally gathered municipal feedback on the tools necessary to ensure the success

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FEATURED DISTRICT: DISTRICT 5

District 5 Ramps Up Municipal Communication

PennDOT districts continue to fine-tune their collaborative project development process under PennDOT Connects. In District 5 (Monroe, Carbon, Schuylkill, Berks, Lehigh, and Northampton counties), PennDOT planner Vanessa



Koenigkramer says they have had to play catch-up with legacy projects under the 2017 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), but they are actively engaging municipalities for new projects based on 2019 TIP development.

“Ideally, we want to meet with municipalities before a project gets on the TIP,” Koenigkramer says. “That’s what we’re working toward.” According to Koenigkramer, PennDOT Connects formalizes much of what her district had done in the past – required meetings with municipalities and documentation of community issues and opportunities to make outreach a more collaborative and transparent process.

“We’re having a lot of success with PennDOT Connects at the scoping field views, and that occurs early in the preliminary engineering stage,” she says.

Koenigkramer notes that understanding the entire project development process is important for municipalities. “Preliminary engineering can take 18 to 24 months,” she explains. “It might be a matter of years till a project is open for bid and a municipality gets the notice that PennDOT is moving forward.”

She notes that municipalities benefit from simply learning more about the project development process. For example, they might have a concern about roadway standards.

“Sometimes they find out that we’re already addressing a concern and that it’s already a part of the project,” she says. “It’s good to have that communication so they know that we’re going to take their concerns into account.”

So far, Koenigkramer reports that mobility and access concerns have topped the list for municipal priorities in District 5 for the larger transportation projects. Other top areas of interest for her district include site design and roadway standards, project funding, stormwater management, bike-ped mobility and safety, and community walkability.

BEST PRACTICE

Boalsburg Small Area Plan Bolsters Connectivity



Harris Township, Centre County, recognizes the importance of improving connectivity for all modes of transportation in its Boalsburg Small Area Plan, which was adopted in 2016. The Small Area Plan provides a more detailed land use and

mobility plan for the historic Village of Boalsburg and for commercial and culturally significant areas immediately surrounding the village proper.

The Small Area Plan included several actions related to transportation improvements, including the creation of bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The addition of these facilities would provide safer access to the businesses and cultural and recreational sites in the Boal Avenue corridor, as well as enhance pedestrian connections to the Centre Area Transportation Authority (CATA) public transit route serving Boalsburg.

To help facilitate the addition of sidewalks and bicycle facilities in the corridor, the Small Area Plan recommends that a “road diet” be implemented on Boal Avenue. The proposed road diet would:

- reduce the number of travel lanes to one in each direction;
- add a center turn lane and dedicated turn lanes at the signalized intersections; and
- add bicycle lanes, all within the existing curb lines.

The addition of sidewalks along the corridor may be implemented as part of the road diet initiative or may be completed through a separate project.

Because PennDOT has scheduled this section of Boal Avenue for a maintenance repaving project within the next few years, Harris Township and the Centre County Metropolitan Planning Organization (CCMPO) are completing a traffic analysis and conceptual design so that, if a road diet is determined to be feasible, the improvements could be implemented in coordination with the repaving project. Harris Township, CCMPO, and PennDOT Engineering District 2 staff have discussed the proposed road diet, the work elements needed to determine whether the changes to the roadway are feasible, and design concepts for potential changes.

FEATURED PROJECTS: DISTRICT 5

Highway Reconstruction Adds Pedestrian Bridge to Design

As a direct result of feedback from stakeholders, the reconstruction of the West Shore Bypass in Berks County now includes the construction of a new pedestrian bridge that will safely carry Thun Trail users over several busy highways.

The project also includes plans to remove an old railroad bridge (currently used by pedestrians and cyclists), because it connects trail users to an isolated area and it hydraulically impedes a bridge downstream. The project is currently in the preliminary engineering phase with an anticipated let date of fall 2022.

US 422 (WEST SHORE BYPASS) FROM ROUTE 12 TO US 422 BUSINESS IN CUMRU AND EXETER TOWNSHIPS, WEST READING AND WYOMISSING BOROUGHS, AND THE CITY OF READING, BERKS COUNTY



Existing pedestrian bridge (former RR bridge) beneath West Shore Bypass.



Conceptual design of West Shore Bypass with new pedestrian bridge provides connectivity for businesses and community, access to the Thun Trail, and safety for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Multimodal Bridge to Replace Cementon Bridge

The PennDOT Connects process was recently used in two District 5 municipalities when PennDOT met with various neighborhood and regional consulting parties to determine how a bridge replacement can better serve as a link between destinations in these communities. Structurally deficient, the 575-foot long, two-lane bridge is a critical link for pedestrians and bicyclists crossing the Lehigh River between Cementon and Northampton boroughs and is the sole connection for recreational users of the Delaware and Lehigh (D&L) Trail.

CEMENTON BRIDGE ROUTE 329, WHITEHALL TOWNSHIP, LEHIGH COUNTY, AND BOROUGHS OF NORTHAMPTON, NORTHAMPTON COUNTY

Following extensive study of local and regional plans and current pedestrian counts along the current bridge's sidewalk, a 10-foot wide multi-use trail was recommended and further discussed with stakeholders. In July 2017, PennDOT met with the D&L Trail National Heritage Corridor, the Wildlands Conservancy, Lehigh County officials, and Whitehall Township to discuss improved access from the D&L Trail, the local sidewalk system, and the Canal Street Park. The project is currently in the preliminary engineering phase with an anticipated let date of summer 2020.



D&L Trail



Existing Cementon Bridge

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Q&A Session with Secretary Richards

of the PennDOT Connects initiative for all the involved stakeholders.

Additionally, training is under development, and technical assistance is now available for local governments through the PennDOT Connects Support Hub at paconnect.org.

Q: What are some examples of issues that may be raised during PennDOT Connects meetings with PennDOT and MPOs/RPOs?

Specific areas to be discussed during collaboration include, but are not limited to, safety issues, bicycle/pedestrian accommodations, transit access, stormwater management, utility issues, local and regional plans and studies, freight-generating land uses, and more.

Local government officials will have the unique opportunity to define specific ways that they can collaborate and add value to each other and the plans and projects that unite them.

Q: What else do you want local governments to know about PennDOT Connects?

I will stay involved in the roll-out and implementation of PennDOT Connects. I believe strongly in the need and benefit of PennDOT Connects and our policy to improve our transportation-local government collaboration. And it is very important to note that my high expectations for PennDOT Connects are not only for PennDOT staff to make this work, but just as high for our planning partners and our communities — the bar must be set high for all involved.

I also believe that PennDOT Connects will be a game changer and that it will endure. Why is that so? One clear indication comes from a recent National Cooperative

Highway Research Board report on the role of planning in a 21st century state DOT, which states “Transportation is a factor in people’s choices about where to live, where to work, and where to play, supporting and affecting the quality of life in every state and community. State DOTs are no longer just held accountable for the transportation system; they are also held accountable for how the system supports and improves quality of life for communities.” (NCHRP Report 798)

My expectation is that we will continue to identify these win-win collaborations among PennDOT, MPOs/RPOs, local governments, and our many stakeholders.



The Role of Planning in a 21st Century State Department of Transportation — Supporting Strategic Decisionmaking
Transportation Research Board, National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) Report 798: 3/23/2016

State DOTs are no longer just held accountable for the transportation system; they are also held accountable for how the system supports and improves quality of life for communities.

NCHRP Report 798



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Transportation Planning: Connecting with Community Priorities



Mobility & Efficiency



Multimodal Transportation



Safety



Community Character



Project Funding



Accommodating Growth