FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

S.R. 0424, SECTION 390
HAZLETON BELTWAY EXTENSION
HAZLE TOWNSHIP
LUZERNE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

April 18, 2018
The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has determined that the Hazleton Beltway Extension (S.R. 424, Section 390) will have no significant impact on the human environment. This determination has been made based on the S.R. 0424, Section 390, Hazleton Beltway Extension Environmental Assessment (EA) (December 2017), the supporting technical reports (as listed in this FONSI), review of the comments received during the EA availability period and the responses to those comments (Attachment A), and the mitigation commitments included in the EA and summarized in this FONSI.

PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED

The Greater Hazleton Area, with a population of approximately 85,000, consists of several communities located in and around southern Luzerne County, including the City of Hazleton, West Hazleton Borough, Freeland Borough, Hazle Township, Beaver Meadows Borough, McAdoo Borough, Sugarloaf Township, Conyngham Borough, and Butler Township. Within this community resides the Humboldt Industrial Park (HIP), one of Pennsylvania's largest industrial parks and home to many businesses and industries that employ a large portion of the Greater Hazleton Area work force. In addition, Eagle Rock Resort, a large gated resort community, is located to the west of HIP. Neither the HIP nor the resort has been developed to capacity. This community of municipalities and industrial and residential developments is served by several main transportation corridors in the existing roadway network, consisting of I-81, S.R. 0424, and S.R. 0924. The existing S.R. 0424 roadway, known as the “Hazleton Beltway,” connects S.R. 0309 to I-81 at Exit 141 and terminates at the I-81/Exit 141 interchange. This creates a gap from the Hazleton Beltway to the HIP, limiting access from the GHA to the large industrial, commercial, and residential areas west of I-81. There is no secondary access into the HIP from S.R. 0424 or I-81, and all traffic must currently proceed along S.R. 0924.

In order to better serve the above communities and accommodate regional growth, the purpose of the project is to provide a secondary and emergency access between I-81 and HIP, as well as additional incident management for local roadways. Details are provided in the SR. 0424, Section 390, Hazleton Beltway Extension EA (December 2017).
Two project needs were identified based on the existing and projected condition of the transportation network and operations. The project needs are system linkage/transportation demand and traffic operations.

**System Linkage/Transportation Demand**

- Provide an additional access for both HIP users and local vehicular traffic via increased network connectivity.
- Provide a direct, continuous transportation facility through the study area
- Accommodate regional growth of the Greater Hazleton Area.

**Traffic Operations**

- Provide an additional access route to the HIP
- Provide an additional route for both HIP users and local traffic in case of an emergency either within the HIP, on S.R. 0924, and/or on I-81
- Provide an incident management route for an incident on I-81.

**SELECTED ALTERNATIVE**

Three alternatives were carried into Detailed Analysis; Alternative 4, Alternative 4A, and Alternative 4A Modified. All three alternatives would meet the project purpose and needs. However, Alternatives 4A and 4A Modified posed concerns due to their location above abandoned subsurface mining areas that could create stability issues associated with subsidence. In addition, Alternative 4A Modified would require the relocation/displacement of a commercial warehouse/distribution building. Based on traffic analysis, Alternatives 4 would provide the best traffic operation improvement due to its ability to connect to the White Birch Extension and the elimination of the direct connection to Forest Drive, which has sharp turns that are not as conducive to truck movements.

Alternative 4 was chosen as the Selected Alternative. The Selected Alternative meets the project purpose and needs identified by FHWA and PennDOT for system linkage/transportation demand and traffic operations, minimizes impacts to resources within the study area, and provides the most effective secondary and emergency access between I-81 and HIP, as well as additional incident management for local roadways.

**System Linkage and Transportation Demand**

The Selected Alternative would provide access from I-81 and the existing S.R. 0424 Hazleton Beltway into the HIP, providing a direct connection through the industrial park to S.R. 0924 from Commerce Drive, Forest Road, and the White Birch Road extension. This new access would help to accommodate regional growth in the Greater Hazleton Area, in particular, within the HIP’s Humboldt Station, Humboldt East campus, and Humboldt West campus, as well as Humboldt
Northwest; Humboldt North; and the Eagle Rock Resort, Cranberry Creek, and Pagnotti properties adjacent to the I-81 and S.R. 0924 interchange.

Traffic Operations

The Selected Alternative would provide an additional access to the HIP from I-81 that can serve as an incident management route for accidents along the I-81 and/or S.R. 0924 corridors in Hazle Township. This additional route will also alleviate local traffic concerns during peak hours for vehicles accessing Eagle Rock Resort and the various commercial and industrial businesses, including the McCann School of Business & Technology located in the HIP.

In addition to addressing the project purpose and needs, Alternative 4 will minimize impacts to the environmental and cultural resources with minimal impact to socioeconomic resources. Alternative 4 will avoid or significantly minimize impacts to surface and groundwater resources, avoiding all jurisdictional wetlands, waterways, and drinking water wells or reservoirs in the Mount Pleasant watershed. Coordination with the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the PA Game Commission (PGC) was undertaken to ensure that there would be no adverse impacts to protected species and impacts to their habitat would be minimized. The Selected Alternative will have minimal impacts to hazardous waste sites and utilities, while requiring no impacts to environmental justice populations, local communities, or displacement of businesses.

Avoidance and minimization efforts were incorporated into the Selected Alternative; however, unavoidable impacts would occur as part of project implementation. A summary of the mitigation commitments for the Selected Alternative is noted below.

Mitigation Measures

The following summarizes how adverse impacts will be avoided, minimized, and mitigated for the Selected Alternative.

- Regulated Wetlands – Permanent impacts to wetlands were minimized to 0.2 acres of isolated palustrine emergent wetland along a utility right-of-way. PennDOT will develop and implement a compensatory wetland mitigation plan for these impacts. In addition, an approved Erosion and Sedimentation (E&S) Control Plan with Best Management Practices for E&S controls will be implemented that includes the installation of orange protective fencing around wetlands to be avoided prior to clearing and grubbing activities (fencing locations to be identified on the project’s E&S Control Plan). Construction equipment will be prohibited from being refueled in regulated waters to further limit impacts to wetland areas.

- Threatened & Endangered (T&E) Species – Within the project area, T&E species include both flora and faunal species. Plant species of concern and a Woodland Community of Concern (Ridgetop Dwarf Tree Forest) will be protected by the installation of orange protective fencing around wetlands where plant species were observed prior to clearing and grubbing activities (fencing locations to be identified on the project’s E&S Control Plan). Construction equipment and vehicles will be cleaned before entering construction sites, and a restriction on
the use of seed mixes with invasive plant species will be maintained to prevent the spread of
invasive species that could impact these threatened and endangered plant communities. In
addition, T&E Species include the Indiana and Northern Long-Eared Bat which would be
impacted by tree clearing activities. A special provision for timbering time restrictions will
be prepared that requires the construction schedule to comply with timbering restrictions
(cutting only allowed from November 15 to March 31). The project will also require the
retention of any shagbark hickory trees, dead and dying trees, and large diameter trees (greater
than 12 inch diameter at breast height), which serve as roost trees for bats.

- **Wildlife** – impacts to migratory bird species will be avoided and minimized with the
development of habitat restoration plans, while the performance of roadway maintenance
activities and vegetative clearing between September 1 and March 31 will help to avoid take
of breeding birds, nests, and their young. Native plant species will be used for any replanting
efforts. In addition, impacts to pollinators that utilize the roadway corridor will be minimized
by the use of pollinator-friendly native wildflower seed mixes and flowering shrubs and trees
along roadways and medians, and judicious mowing and herbicide use when possible to
promote pollinator usage.

- **Farmland** - E&S Control Plans will be developed during final design for the Plans,
Specifications and Estimates (PS&E) Package to minimize the soil erosion and direct impacts
to Soils of Statewide Importance and Prime Farmland Soils.

- **Utilities** – Direct impacts to the existing water lines, sewer lines, and gas lines, as well as
overhead electrical distribution lines are anticipated. To minimize these impacts, PennDOT
will complete additional coordination with utility companies during final design to coordinate
relocation or reconstruction of impacted utilities with the design and construction schedule of
the project, complete additional PA One Call prior to ground disturbance activities, and
complete subsurface utility engineering to determine precise utility locations.

- **Waste Sites** – the Selected Alternative has the potential to impact contaminated soils
associated with the PPL Harwood Site. If waste material at this site requires excavation,
additional soil sampling will be required and a Scope of Work Plan will be prepared and
provided to the PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) for approval of proposed
management options (e.g., disposal at an approved permitted facility or reburial on site).

- **Geologic Features** – road cut areas would result in large volumes of waste associated with
mining practices (acid mine drainage) and acid-bearing rock. The rock cuts may also result
in slope stability issues. As a result, efforts will be made to balance earthwork to minimize
the amount of waste material generated and potential rock cuts will be assessed to determine
the need for the implementation of rockfall controls.

- **Stormwater Management** – the Selected Alternative is situated within the Hazleton City
Authority (HCA) drinking watershed. To minimize the impact on water quality, stormwater
will be managed by the development of a Drainage and Stormwater Management Plan during
final design and as part of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES)
permit process. In addition, Best Management Practices will be incorporated into the
Drainage and Stormwater Management Plan, including: a controlled drainage system that involves curbing, inlets, pipes, lined swales, and detention ponds. Water quality Best Management Practices, such as bioretention areas, infiltration basins, and sediment forebays, will be utilized to treat runoff from the site.

Environmental Assessment and Technical Reports

The EA was approved for public availability and release to the public by the FHWA, Pennsylvania Division on January 19, 2018. The public comment period on the EA began on January 21, 2018 and ended on February 19, 2018. A public hearing was not requested. Advertisements regarding the EA availability were placed in the Hazleton paper, the Standard Speaker, on January 21, 2018 (Sunday) and again on January 24, 2018 (Wednesday) (Appendix B). Additionally, an article about the project and the EA’s availability appeared in the January 29, 2018 edition of the Standard Speaker. The EA was available for review and download through the PennDOT District 4-0 website.

Technical reports have been prepared for the following subject areas and are included in the project technical file:

- Traffic (Traffic Analysis Report)
- Noise (Noise Analysis Report)
- Wetlands and Waterways (Waters of the U.S. Identification Report)
- Water Quality (Mount Pleasant Watershed Impact Assessment Memorandum; included field testing results of Mount Pleasant water supply)
- Threatened & Endangered Species (Bat Habitat Survey Report, T&E Plants Survey Report)
- Hazardous Waste Sites (Phase I ESA)
- Historic Resources (Phase IA and IB Archeological Reports)
- Soil Characteristics (Roadway Borings/Infiltration Testing Report)

Technical files are being maintained for the following subject areas:

- Agriculture (AD-1006 Farmland Form)
- Geology (Mine Map)
- Proposed Development and Local Planning
- Wetlands and Waterways (Including Wetland Mitigation)
- Threatened & Endangered Species
- Water Quality (Groundwater)
- Public Involvement and Agency Coordination (Meeting Minutes)
- Hazardous Waste (Phase I ESA)
- Environmental Commitment and Mitigation Tracking System (ECMTS)
- Alternatives Assessment
During the comment period, hard copies of the EA were also available for review at the following locations:

- FHWA, Pennsylvania Division
- Department of Transportation, Engineering District 4-0
- Hazleton Area Public Library
- Hazle Township Supervisors Office

Letters were sent to the federal, state and local resource agencies, as well as local stakeholders, informing them of the availability of the EA on the District 4-0 website as well as at the locations noted above. The public had the opportunity to provide written comments throughout the comment period. All comments provided were reviewed and addressed. Comments and responses are included in the Environmental Assessment Responses to Comments Report (March 2018) (Attachment A).

Finding of No Significant Impact

This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is based on the project record including:

- S.R. 0424, Section 390 Hazleton Beltway Extension Environmental Assessment (December 2017) and associated documents and studies referenced in this document;
- Environmental Assessment Responses to Comments Report (March 2018) (Attachment A); and
- Errata to the Environmental Assessment (Attachment C).

These documents and supporting documentation find that there is no practical alternative to construction of the Proposed Action, and the Proposed Action includes all practical measures to minimize harm to natural, cultural, and socioeconomic resources, which may result from the proposed project.

The EA and EA Response to Comment Report have been independently evaluated by the FHWA and determined to discuss adequately and accurately the need, environmental issues, and impacts of the proposed project and appropriate mitigation measures. They provide sufficient evidence and analysis for determining that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required. The FHWA takes full responsibility for the accuracy, scope, and content of the EA and associated documentation.

Pursuant to:
42 U.S.C. 4231-4347
40 CFR 1500-1508
23 CFR 771
36 CFR 800
49 U.S.C. 303(c)
23 CFR 774
DATE

Keith Lynch, Director of Program Development

Federal Highway Administration – Pennsylvania Division

Attachments
A. Environmental Assessment Responses to Comments Report, March 2018
B. EA Advertisements
C. Errata to the Environmental Assessment
This Comment Response Document provides responses to comments received on the Environmental Assessment (EA) report which was provided to the public for their review and comment on January 19, 2018. The EA Evaluation was made available at four locations near and within Hazle Township as well at the PennDOT Engineering District 4-0 building in Dunmore, Pennsylvania and at the FHWA Pennsylvania Division office. Written comments were accepted on the Draft EA until February 20, 2018 and are addressed below.

The Comment Response Document is divided into two main sections: Comments Received from Federal, State, and Local Agencies and Comments Received from the General Public and Stakeholders.

Each comment author is noted followed by the agency or organization they represent, if applicable. The comment author’s mailing address is also noted, if provided. The full text of the comment, and the Project Team’s response, is provided following the author’s information.
Comments Received from Federal, State, and Local Agencies

Comment #1: Tracey Librandi Mumma. Pennsylvania Game Commission, Environmental Planning & Habitat Protection Division. 2001 Elmerton Avenue, Harrisburg PA 17110. 717-787-4250 ext 3614. tlibrandi@pa.gov.

Comment: Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Hazelton Beltway Extension Environmental Assessment. The PGC only has one comment related to information found on Page 35 of the document. A sentence currently incorrectly states the status of Indiana bats and incorrectly species the scientific name. The sentence, "Subsequent coordination with these agencies revealed the need to conduct habitat assessments for the state threatened Myotis leibii (eastern small-footed bat), the federally threatened Myotis sodalis (Indiana bat) and Myotis septentrionalis (northern long-eared bat)" should be corrected to (changes highlighted in red), “Subsequent coordination with these agencies revealed the need to conduct habitat assessments for the state threatened Myotis leibii (eastern small-footed bat), the federally endangered Myotis sodalis (Indiana bat) and federally threatened Myotis septentrionalis (northern long-eared bat).

It appears that elsewhere in the document the species’ statuses are correctly identified.

Response: Thank you for your review of the Environmental Assessment (EA). The Project Team agrees with the proposed changes to correct the incorrectly stated status of the Indiana bat and species scientific name. The Errata sheet that will accompany the FONSI and attached EA will reflect this agreed change.

Comment #2: Megan Pulver. PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Forestry, Natural Heritage Section. 400 Market Street, Harrisburg PA 17105-8552. 717-705-2819. c-mpulver@pa.gov.

Comment: Please find below DCNR’s comments pertaining to the Environmental Assessment for the subject project.

• In the final design phase, consider steepened slopes to minimize cut and fill impacts to the ridgetop dwarf-tree forest community. Also consider minimizing the footprint of clearing and grubbing activities within this forest community. If possible, avoid placing equipment staging areas or other temporary access areas in this community.

• In addition to the previously recommended conservation measures for invasive species prevention (Table 17), consider additional BMPs found in PennDOT Publication 756, Invasive Species Best Management Practices.

• For reference, The Bureau of Forestry’s recommended native planting and seeding guidelines can be found here: http://www.docs.dcnr.pa.gov/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr_20031083.pdf

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project.
Response: Thank you for your review of the Environmental Assessment (EA). During final design, the Project Team will consider minimizing cuts and fill as well as the limits of disturbance, where applicable, to minimize impacts to the RDTF community. In addition, BMPs identified in Publication 756 and native plantings and seeding will be utilized to prevent the spread of invasive species while establishing a native plant cover along the proposed alignment.


Via Email:
The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 3 (EPA) appreciates the opportunity to review the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the State Route 0424, Section 390 Hazleton Beltway Extension in Hazle Township, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania. As noted in our attached letter, EPA would like to continue to participate in the project’s environmental review and project development and we encourage continued impact avoidance and minimization as the design moves forward. (The version attached will be replaced with a corrected version that has been signed. We’re having some mechanical problems and I can’t send the newer version).

We also understand the exclusion of Alternative 4B, as stated in the EA, was to avoid conflicts with the utility transmission alignment and avoid wetland and drinking water impacts. We would like to discuss further with you the possibility for Alternative 4B to be shifted to the north side of the utility line, further from the Cross Run tributary and the Mount Pleasant Reservoir, and possibly resulting in reduced loss of forested land than the Build Alternatives assessed in detail in the EA (Alternatives 4, 4A, and 4A Modified.

Thank you for considering our comments and we look forward to discussing this project with you further. Please feel free to contact Rebecca Glyn at 215-814-2795 (cc’d here) or me if there are any questions. We’ll have the revised copy with the typo corrected to you tomorrow.

Thanks, Barbara

Response: Thank you for your review of the Environmental Assessment (EA). Alternative 4B was part of the initial evaluation of Preliminary and Reasonable Alternatives. Alternative 4B was eliminated after Phase II due to its potential impact on water quality associated with Hazleton City Authority’s (HCA) drinking water watershed, including proximity to HCA’s Wells, its impact on EV wetlands, which also were found to support plant species of concern, and its impact on the PPL electrical line. Moving this alternative to the northern side of the PPL Utility line would bring the alignment closer to Well #2 and impact EV wetlands, further impacting the HCA’s drinking water quality. In addition, the roadway vertical profile would not allow for stormwater to be discharged away from the HCA wells, reservoirs and watershed, since the existing terrain would create a low spot near HCA Well #2. The steeper vertical profile would be less conducive to heavy vehicle (truck) traffic with long uphill and downhill grades. The alignment would also directly impact PPL transmission towers south of the railroad near Commerce Drive. Finally, the proposed 4B alignment tie-in to Commerce Drive would be north-south and not east-west and not
provide a direct east-west connection with White Birch Road for the necessary distribution of traffic.

Alternative 4, 4A & 4A Modified were subsequently studied in more detail as these would have minimal impact on the HCA Watershed (and no impact on wells), avoid EV wetlands and associated plant species of concern, and have limited impact on the PPL transmission line. Alternative 4 will result in only minimal impacts to isolated wetlands along the utility ROW that developed in small depressions left behind after the utility installation (e.g., tire tracks, borrow pit). These alternatives were presented and approved for further study at the Agency Coordination Meeting (November 19, 2014) which was attended by the EPA’s Barbara Okron.

Via Letter:

1. General
   a. We encourage the project team to continue coordinating with the public and state and federal agencies. While the EA details coordination efforts at various stages of the project development, we recommend next steps in coordination and any anticipated additional studies be explained and provided to stakeholders.

   Response: The Project Team will continue to keep public and resource agencies informed of the project as it progresses into Final Design. The selected alternative will involve permitting associated with ground disturbance and aquatic impacts, requiring further coordination with resource agencies for approval of erosion and sedimentation, post-construction stormwater management, wetland mitigation, and roadway design plans. Project updates will be posted on PennDOT District 4-0’s project website for review by the local stakeholders and the public.

2. Geologic Features: Mining, Acid Rock Drainage, Steep Slopes and Rock Cuts
   a. The EA notes the potential for acid rock drainage problems during construction due to the project’s location within the anthracite coal region. We recommend future design studies describe remedial measures to buffer potential acid rock drainage runoff, should any of the Build Alternatives encounter this issue. The Catawissa Creek watershed in the southern portion of the project is of particular concern in this regard, given its impairment for metals and low pH from historic acid mine drainage under Clean Water Act Section 303(d) and Total Maximum Daily Load requirements.

   Response: All alternatives considered had the potential for acid rock drainage due to their location within the anthracite coal region. The EA study resulted in the selection of Alternatives 4, 4A & 4A Modified which would result in the least potential impact on environmental, cultural and socioeconomic resources. Soil borings were completed along the Alternative 4 alignment and no acid bearing rock (ABR) was encountered. During Final Design, if ABR is encountered, measures will be developed, as appropriate, to address the concern for acid rock drainage.

   b. The EA also notes the potential for undercutting and subsidence due to the project’s geologic setting. We recommend the Final EA provide maps, assessments, and
mitigation measures for potential subsidence issues of the Build Alternatives, as well as potential locations of acid-bearing rock in the study area.

Response: Alternatives 4, 4A & 4A Modified all have the potential for undercutting and subsidence due to their geologic setting. As noted in the EA, Soil borings were completed along the Alternative 4 alignment and bedrock was encountered. While the potential for undercutting and subsidence appear minimal, during final design, mitigation measures will be developed, as appropriate, to address any potential for rock slides and subsidence.

3. Surface Waters (Wetlands, Streams, and Floodplains)

a. We recommend highlighting EV waters and wetlands in all maps and tables to assist review of future reports and analyses. It would also be helpful to include maps and other data supporting jurisdictional determinations by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Response: The Preferred Alternative (Alternative 4) will not impact any EV wetlands. However, EV wetlands (Wetland 1A, 1B) will be better identified in figures and tables in future reports and permits. The existing maps reflect the jurisdictional determinations (JD) by the USACE, however, we will make sure the project technical file includes mapping and supporting documents associated with the project JD’s.

b. We recommend the final project design consider best management practices for stormwater to avoid discharging runoff into aquatic resources.

Response: To maintain water quality within the HCA Watershed, the project design will incorporate BMPs into the Drainage and Stormwater Management Plan, including a controlled drainage system that involves curbing, inlets, pipes, lined swales, and detention ponds. Water quality BMPs, such as bioretention areas, infiltration basins, and sediment forebays, would be utilized, as necessary, to treat runoff from the site. The Project Team does not anticipate any discharging of runoff into wetlands or waterways delineated in the project study area. As approved by PADEP, stormwater will be directed through pipes and swales associated with I-81 stormwater conveyance system into mine lands located east of I-81. BMPs will be incorporated in final design, where applicable.

4. Stormwater Management

a. Wherever possible, the project should use “green infrastructure” or “low impact development” practices to decentralize and minimize the impact of stormwater management facilities, such as reducing impervious surfaces and using vegetative treatments, such as the Bioretention areas recommended in the EA. For these measures to be effective, they should be incorporated early in the project design phase.

Response: As noted above in response 3b, the project will utilize a controlled drainage system that involves curbing, inlets, pipes, lined swales, and detention ponds. Water quality BMPs, such as bioretention areas, infiltration basins, and sediment forebays, would be utilized, as necessary, to treat runoff from the site. These BMP’s will be employed to reduce impacts to the HCA’s
drinking water sources, and additional green infrastructure and LID practices will be considered (ex. vegetated swales), where applicable, during final design.

5. Forested Land and Natural Resources

a. The EA recommends mitigation measures to avoid and minimize impacts to the federally listed endangered Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*), plant species of special concern, and the Ridgetop Dwarf-Tree Forest (RDTF), a Pennsylvania community of special concern, which qualifies as “Natural Resources Meriting Compensation” under the 2007 Natural Resources Assessment and Mitigation Agency Partnering Policy. We recommend the Final EA or future design include additional mitigation measures to compensate for unavoidable impacts to RDTF and its buffer areas. It would be helpful to include the referenced 2007 policy document in the appendices of the Final EA for review.

**Response:** Coordination with the Pennsylvania Department of Natural Resource (DCNR) was completed during the development of project alternatives and the selection of the preferred alternative. In addition, DCNR reviewed the Draft EA and recommended steepened slopes to minimize cut and fill impacts to the RDTF, minimizing the footprint of clearing and grubbing activities within this forest community, and avoiding the placement of equipment staging areas or other temporary access areas in this RDTF community. These measures will be investigated and employed, where applicable, in final design. The Project Team will also include the 2007 Natural Resources Assessment and Mitigation Agency Partnering Policy in the FONSI.

b. We recommend the evaluation of resource impacts in the Final EA include loss of ecosystem services, including carbon sinks, particularly associated with the anticipated deforestation of 16.9 acres for Alternative 4 and 12.8 acres for Alternatives 4A and 4A Modified.

**Response:** To limit impacts to the forestland, the alternatives selected for further study (Alternative 4, 4A, and 4A Modified) were aligned as close as possible to the I-81 corridor and the railroad alignment. While reducing the potential impact to the HCA drinking watershed, these alternatives also limited impacts primarily to a pole-stage forest canopy and dwarf trees associated with the RDTF.

c. We recommend the Final EA discuss, or future designs incorporate, wildlife passage structures to mitigate impacts to forested land.

**Response:** As noted in the Response 5b, the alternatives selected for further study (Alternative 4, 4A, and 4A Modified) were aligned as close as possible to the I-81 corridor and the railroad alignment. The I-81 alignment already restricts wildlife passage in the east-west direction, while the railroad separates the development of the HIP (north) and the forestland of the Pismire Natural Area (south). As a result, fragmentation of the existing Pismire Natural Area forest tract will be minimized and existing wildlife passage will not be further compromised.

d. Consideration of active invasive species monitoring and control would be appropriate to include in the Final EA and project design plans.
Response: As the EA notes in Table 17 (Summary for Recommended Mitigation for Preferred Alternative), the spread of invasive species will be limited by the cleaning of construction equipment and vehicles before entering the construction site and the use of seed mixes with invasive plant species will be limited. DCNR also recommends the use of BMPs found in PennDOT Publication 756, Invasive Species Best Management Practices to further limit the spread of invasive species. The Project Team will incorporate additional BMPs, where applicable, during final design. Bureau of Forestry’s recommended native planting and seeding guidelines will further assist with limiting the invasive species by establishing a native cover.

6. Environmental Justice
   a. We recommend the Final EA provide greater detail on the methodology used to conduct the Environmental Justice Assessment.
   b. Since the Latino population of the study area exceeds the local population average, we recommend providing more information on accommodations for residents for whom English is a second language.
   c. We recommend the Final EA identify any localized minority or low-income populations residing in the study area, and efforts to proactively engage these populations in public outreach efforts.

Response: The EJ Assessment involved a review of secondary source information, including Census data and EJ information from the Lackawanna/Luzerne MPO, as well as project field views. The project study area primarily encompasses the HIP and the adjacent industrial and retail/commercial campuses of Humboldt East and Humboldt Station. Based on these results, no EJ communities were documented in the project area. However, EJ communities are located in the surrounding communities, including Hispanic and Latino populations. The project does not require acquisition of any residences, businesses, or community facilities from EJ communities that could lead to direct EJ impacts. The project will benefit all communities in the Greater Hazleton Area (GHA) by improving traffic flow, and improved incident management for first responder response times to the HIP and Greater Hazleton Area. The proposed project will result in a positive impact both locally and within the GHA. Noise-sensitive land uses are not present in proximity to the project alternatives. Land within the project area is designated for commercial/industrial uses, and not for housing or community facilities. Construction-related noise impacts are not anticipated based on the lack of noise-sensitive land uses adjacent to the project area. Therefore, there will not be any indirect impacts to EJ communities associated with noise or the potential reduction of housing opportunities resulting from the project. As noted in PennDOT Publication 746 [Project Level Environmental Justice Guidance (3-16), Section 2.6 p.18], 1) there are no minority or low-income populations present in the project area or if present, 2) there are no disproportionately high and adverse effects to minority and low-income populations, the following finding statement should be included in the NEPA document: "No known minority or low-income populations have been identified that would be disproportionately highly and adversely affected by this project as determined above.

The Project Team contacted the Lackawanna Luzerne MPO to identify effective strategies the MPO has employed to reach out to local EJ communities, including the Latino population. The
MPO is currently in the process of developing outreach efforts for their master plan and a Limited-English Proficient (LEP) Plan is provided in the MPO’s Public Participation Plan (2015 update).

There are Latino communities in the vicinity of the project study area. Opportunities for EJ and Latino outreach in the GHA include the Hazleton One Community Center as well as two Spanish-language newspapers (Poder Latino News, El Mensjero International). The Project Team will reach out to the Community Center to provide information about the project, as well as how questions can be submitted as the project advances into final design. The Project Team will also provide a public notice announcement to the newspapers to further engage these communities. Finally, the Project Team will continue to inform CANDO and local stakeholders on the project’s progress so they can disseminate information to businesses within the HIP that employ the local workforce.

7. Air Quality and Noise
Below are specific recommendations for the Air Quality portion of the EA. We would be pleased to discuss any of the recommendations with you in further detail at your convenience.

a. EPA recommends including the Federal Register citation (58 FR 62188) for the final transportation conformity rule, as well as citations to the CFR. We recommend referring to this rule as the “transportation conformity rule” and its requirements as “transportation conformity requirements,” to differentiate from general conformity requirements. We suggest the following edits:

   i. “A final transportation conformity rule was first issued by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on November 24, 1993 (58 FR 62188), as part of the 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 51. The transportation conformity rule can be found in 40 Code Federal Regulations (CFR) 51.390 and part 93, subpart A.”

b. EPA recommends adding ozone (O_3) and nitrogen dioxide (NO_2) to the title of “Carbon Monoxide (CO) and Particulate Matter (PM_{2.5} and PM_{10})” under “Existing Conditions,” to include all criteria pollutants established in the transportation conformity rule.

c. EPA recommends including a reference to 40 CFR 81.339 in the discussion of Luzerne County, PA attaining the NAAQS. EPA also recommends citing CFR in the explanation of why the transportation conformity rule does not apply to the project. We suggest the following edits:

   i. Luzerne County has been designated in 40 CFR 81.339 as “attainment” for all regional air pollutants (as well as all criteria pollutants); therefore, per 40 CFR 93.102(b), the transportation conformity requirements, as outlined in the Clean Air Act and 40 CFR 51.390 and part 93, subpart A, do not apply to this project.”

d. Appendix C, Section B of the EA states the Build Alternatives would have no air quality impacts. We recommend the Final EA note air quality impacts of the project, such as those deriving from construction vehicle emissions and particulate matter from construction activities, as described in the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions Assessment in Appendix C, Section K. We recommend consideration and documentation of any mitigation through Best Management Practices relevant to air emissions be included in the Final EA.
Response: Thank you for providing the editorial comments noted in parts 7a, b, and c. The Project Team agrees with these edits and the EPA's recommendations and they will be reflected in the Errata Sheet included in the FONSI. Ozone (O₃) and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) are included in pollutants listed as “attainment” in the project study area. With respect to 7d, the GHG Emissions Assessment did not look at emissions for construction vehicle emissions and particulate matter from construction activities as they will be temporary and of a short-term duration, and we do not anticipate that they will result in a significant impact to air quality.


Comment (Via Email): Thank you for the opportunity to review the EA for the Hazelton Beltway Extension. In the hopes that you we able to resolve the editorial comments submitted by the PA Game Commission, we have no further comments.

Response: Thank you very much for reviewing the EA and providing your comment. The Project Team agrees with the editorial change requested by PGC and it is noted in our Errata sheet that will be attached to the FONSI.
Comments Received from the General Public and Stakeholders

Comment #1: Kitty’s Auto Parts. kittysap@ptd.net. January 29, 2018.

Comment: The extension of route 424 will add more access to the industrial park for truck, car, and emergency vehicles. Also increase the desirability for industries to locate, because of the access to both interstate 80 and 81 creating more jobs and tax base.

Response: Thank you for your interest in the S.R. 424 Hazleton Beltway Extension project and associated Environmental Assessment. The project purpose and need is to provide additional access for both Humboldt Industrial Park (HIP) users and local traffic, while also providing an incident management route for I-81 users, as well as for emergencies within the HIP, and S.R. 924.


Comment: All one would have to do to know if extending route 424 was a necessary would be to;

1. Look at the 81 924 interchange during rush hour. Especially bad during weather which occurs quite often.
2. Count the number of serious accidents at the interchange at on 924 over the last 5 or so years.

The extension should have been done years ago. Too much babble over this for a long time. I wonder why the south bound exit onto 81 from 924 was set up as is. Really stupid setup to start with. DO FOR SAFETY – less congestion which will reduce AIR POLLUTION. Will allow people from area South apply for jobs in the Park because the commute will be less time and shorter.

Start work tomorrow, not 2019. Include change to make ramp from 924 to 81 going south so you exit right.

Response: Thank you for your interest in the S.R. 424 Hazleton Beltway Extension project and associated Environmental Assessment. The project purpose and need is to provide additional access for both Humboldt Industrial Park (HIP) users and local traffic, while also providing an incident management route for I-81 users, as well as for emergencies within the HIP, and S.R. 924. Final design must be completed before construction can start. The project is anticipated to start construction in the fall 2019, with an anticipated end of construction in 2021. PennDOT is currently conducting an I-81 Regional Planning Study that should provide recommendations for the S.R. 924 / I-81 Interchange.
Comment #3: Gary B. Somits. garysomits@gmail.com. 570-578-9242. February 4, 2018.

Comment: Good Day! This email is in reference to the planned extension to route 424 into the HIP South. I have been an industrial park worker for nearly 40 years now. This is a project that is long, LONG overdue.

I have been an advocate for this numerous times over the years verbally, phone calls, Hazelton Standard Speaker, Wilkes Barre Times Leader, Tarah Toohil, all while it has been “back burnered” yet time and time again.

My strong feeling is simply that if politicians, the media, or PA DOT had to travel this route only once or twice, that action would have been taken years and years ago!

It continues to be an annoyance each and every day. It doesn’t take a math genius to figure why. While the amount of industries has grown from teens to hundreds in the past 25 years, and employees from hundreds to thousands, the access road has remained exactly the same!

Just last week I was again late for work because leaving for work 40 minutes early wasn’t early enough when I am only 1-1/2 miles away from Rt. 424 in Hazelton Heights!! This simply shouldn’t be! We live in the Greater Hazelton Area, not Philadelphia!

The importance of this matter escalates during bad weather, or accidents, when persons lives are on the line, traffic is reduced to a stand-still and it can easily take an hour to get home from or into work.

My hope as I will be retiring in the next 5 years is that I am able to drive on a completed extension once before retiring, and not after, and that it doesn’t take a loss of life to move this year after year delayed project into reality.

Thanks for your time.

Response: Thank you for your interest in the S.R. 424 Hazleton Beltway Extension project and associated Environmental Assessment. The project purpose and need is to provide additional access for both Humboldt Industrial Park (HIP) users and local traffic, while also providing an incident management route for I-81 users, as well as for emergencies within the HIP, and S.R. 924. The project is anticipated to start construction in the fall 2019, with an anticipated end of construction in 2021. We look forward to serving the public.
Comment #4: John Pollock. February 8, 2018. (letter)

Comment: Dear Ms. Williams,

Per our phone conversation on February 7, 2018, I am writing this letter to voice our official objection to the two route options titled “Alternative 4A” and “Alternative 4A Modified” for the Hazelton Beltway Extension.

We are the managing member of Humboldt East Trade Center, LLC, which owns Lot 105 in Humboldt Industrial Park. We are in the process of constructing a 440,504 square foot distribution center/warehouse on our 31 acre site. We have completed most of the site work and we are approximately half way through the construction of core and shell of our building. According to the S.R. 424, Section 390 Project (Hazelton Beltway Extension) Environmental Assessment that was made available for public review, there are two alternatives presented that cross into our property and would be extremely detrimental to both the value and use of our building.

The first alternative, “Alternative 4A”, is proposed on the east side of our lot and would be constructed through our stormwater management basin and employee parking lot. This option, if pursued, would require a complete redesign and reconstruction of our stormwater management system, and the decrease in available parking would reduce the usability and marketability of our property. In all likelihood, we would not be able to meet the stormwater management requirements of the DEP if this pond were not available for stormwater management, putting the entire project at risk. The second alternative, “Alternative 4A Modified,” is proposed to be constructed through the shell of our building. This would require the demolition of a large portion of our building and would detrimentally impact the value and function of our property. Here too, a revised approval by both the township and DEP is unlikely if this option is chosen, and our entire investment would be at risk.

We understand, based on the environmental assessment and our conversation this morning that, “Alternative 4” is the most preferred alternative. We have no objections to the construction of Alternative 4 as it is presented in the Environmental Assessment. We reserve all rights and remedies available to us if the Departments elects to pursue Alternative 4A or Alternative 4A Modified.

Response: Thank you for your interest in the S.R. 424 Hazleton Beltway Extension project and associated Environmental Assessment (EA). The Preferred Alternative has been identified in the EA as Alternative 4 as the alternative that best avoids or minimizes impacts to natural, cultural and socioeconomic resources in the project study area.

Comment: If may comment on the current conditions of Route 924 & the Interstate (81) Southbound & Northbound. I travel Route 924 each day heading to work. It is a dangerous stretch of roadway with the large amount of traffic, vehicles & tractor trailers. Accidents occur each week & deaths occur yearly.

Very happy to hear the new route 924 extension will be in process. The sooner the better. This may alleviate some traffic tie ups. Vehicles line the exit ramp entering onto route 924. This makes for extreme danger of motorists traveling on Interstate 81.

With the Humboldt Industrial Park expanding hope this new extension will help with the safety of our roadways.

Response: Thank you for your interest in the S.R. 424 Hazleton Beltway Extension project and associated Environmental Assessment. The project purpose and need is to provide additional access for both Humboldt Industrial Park (HIP) users and local traffic, while also providing an incident management route for I-81 users, as well as for emergencies within the HIP, and S.R. 924. Final design must be completed before construction can start. The project is anticipated to start construction in the fall 2019, with an anticipated end of construction in 2021. PennDOT is currently conducting an I-81 Regional Planning Study that should provide recommendations for the S.R. 924 / I-81 Interchange.


Comment: In as few words as possible – it can’t be completed fast enough.
As a resident of Eagle Rock, we were assured RT 924 would improve traffic flow immensely. All we got was more auto traffic and trucks so prolific I challenge anyone to even count them. The countless trucks and the vehicles speeding on RT 924 is outrageous. It appears as soon as State Police show up to write a few tickets and they leave, then it turns into the Indy 500.

As a resident of the area, we need help. Get the additional truck traffic off of 924. Please get more aggressive speed control on 924

Richard Malavenda

Response: Thank you for your interest in the S.R. 424 Hazleton Beltway Extension project and associated Environmental Assessment. The project purpose and need is to provide additional access for both Humboldt Industrial Park (HIP) users and local traffic, while also providing an incident management route for I-81 users, as well as for emergencies within the HIP, and S.R. 924. Final design must be completed before construction can start. The project is anticipated to start construction in the fall 2019, with an anticipated end of construction in 2021. PennDOT is currently conducting an I-81 Regional Planning Study that should provide recommendations for the S.R. 924 / I-81 Interchange.
ATTACHMENT B

Environmental Assessment Advertisements
HAZLETON BELTWAY EXTENSION
S.R. 0424, SECTION 390
HAZLE TOWNSHIP, LUZERNE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

LOCAL SITES FOR REVIEWING THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) Engineering District 4-0, in coordination with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), has made copies of the S.R. 0424, Section 390 Project (Hazleton Beltway Extension) Environmental Assessment (EA) available for review. This EA considered improvements to provide secondary and emergency access between I-81 and Humboldt Industrial Park, as well as additional incident management for local roadways along the I-81. Specifically, the S.R. 0424, Section 390 project involves an extension of S.R. 0424 from the I-81/Exit 141 Interchange to Humboldt Industrial Park (HIP) in Hazle Township, Luzerne County. The approximately 1.1-mile long extension would involve the construction of a four-lane roadway from the current termination of the beltway just west of I-81 to Commerce Drive.

The EA will be made available beginning **Sunday, January 21, 2018**, for public review and comment for a period ending until **Monday, February 19, 2018**. We have identified your facility as a local site available to the general public for reviewing the EA document. We ask that you display the document in a readily accessible location for the public to review on the premises of the site. We have also enclosed a copy of the *Notice of Availability of the Environmental Assessment and Opportunity for a Public Hearing*, which includes a list of all public viewing sites. Please keep this Notice with the EA document. Written comments concerning the project should be submitted before **Monday (5PM) February 19, 2018** to:

**Federal Highway Administration**
Division Administrator
228 Walnut Street, Room 508
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17101
Attn: Camille Otto

**OR**

**PENNDOT District 4-0**
George Roberts, P.E., District Executive
55 Keystone Industrial Park
Dunmore, Pennsylvania 18512
Attn: Susan Williams
(570) 963-4253

Thank you for your assistance in making the EA document available to the public. It is important for PennDOT and FHWA to solicit comments from the public on major transportation improvement projects to ensure that the proposed action and improvement designs address not only the needs of the traveling public but also the concerns of the citizens that may be affected by the project.
S.R. 0424, SECTION 390  
HAZLETON BELTWAY EXTENSION  
Hazle Township  
Luzerne County, Pennsylvania  
MPMS #70467

Notice of Availability for Public Review and Comment/Request for Public Hearing  
Environmental Assessment

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) Engineering District 4-0, in coordination with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), has made copies of the S.R. 0424, Section 390 Project (Hazleton Beltway Extension) Environmental Assessment (EA) available for review. The EA is prepared for those projects for which the significance of impacts is not yet clearly known and more analysis is necessary to determine whether impacts are significant. The EA has been prepared in accordance with 23 CFR 771, and the National Environmental Policy Act.

This EA considered improvements to provide secondary and emergency access between I-81 and Humboldt Industrial Park, as well as additional incident management for local roadways along the I-81. Specifically, the S.R. 0424, Section 390 project involves an extension of S.R. 0424 from the I-81/Exit 141 Interchange to Humboldt Industrial Park (HIP) in Hazle Township, Luzerne County. The approximately 1.1-mile long extension would involve the construction of a four-lane roadway from the current termination of the beltway just west of I-81 to Commerce Drive.

A copy of the EA is available at the following locations.

FHWA  
Pennsylvania Division  
Division Administrator  
228 Walnut Street, Room 508  
Harrisburg, PA 17101-1720

Department of Transportation  
Engineering District 4-0  
55 Keystone Industrial Park Rd  
Dunmore, PA 18512

Hazleton Area Public Library  
55 N Church St  
Hazleton, PA 18201

Hazle Township Supervisors Office  
101 West 27th Street  
Hazle Township, PA 18202
The EA is also available for review online at: http://www.penndot.gov/RegionalOffices/district-4/ConstructionsProjectsAndRoadwork/Pages/default.aspx

Hard copies can be obtained by contacting the PennDOT Project Manager Susan Williams at (570) 963-4253.

Written comments may be submitted by email to susawillia@pa.gov, or by mail to:

PA Department of Transportation
Liaison Unit
Engineering District 4-0
55 Keystone Industrial Park
Dunmore, PA 18512

All written comments must be received by 5:00 p.m., February 19, 2018

Interested parties who want to request a public hearing should send a written request for public hearing to the District Executive within 15 days (February 4) at the address below.

PA Department of Transportation
Engineering District 4-0
55 Keystone Industrial Park
Dunmore, PA 18512
Attention: George J. Roberts, District Executive

Requests received within the 15 days may be resolved by contact with the interested party and resolving the issues on an individual basis. If two or more unresolved requests remain, a public hearing will be scheduled.
into NASA Racing Hall of Fame

—of Petty’s career; owner, Yates drives 7 races that include Daytona 500s. A year was in his losing cancer; Kurt Busch sites-powered car to na 500 title. Inducted Friday re-pioneering crew Evernham, Red NASCAR’s first champion, four-time Truck Series champion Ron Hornaday Jr. and Ken Squier, the first broadcaster to make the Hall. Evernham led Jeff Gordon to three of his four championships and changed the sport in his approach to preparing race cars. He pushed limits through innovation, engineering and formed Gordon’s “Rainbow Warriors” pit crew that was the best in NASCAR.

S.R. 0424, SECTION 390
HAZLETON BELTWAY EXTENSION
Hazle Township, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania
PMPS #70467

Notice of Availability for Public Review and Comment/Request for Public Hearing

Environmental Assessment

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) Engineering District 4-O, in coordination with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), has made copies of the S.R. 0424, Section 390 Project (Hazleton Beltway Extension) Environmental Assessment (EA) available for review. The EA is prepared for those projects for which the significance of impacts is not yet clearly known and more analysis is necessary to determine whether impacts are significant. The EA has been prepared in accordance with 23 CFR 771, and the National Environmental Policy Act.

This EA considered improvements to provide secondary and emergency access between I-81 and Humbold Industrial Park, as well as additional incident management for local roadways along the I-81. Specifically, the S.R. 0424, Section 390 project involves an extension of S.R. 0424 from the 1-81/Exit 141 interchange to Humbold Industrial Park (HIP) in Hazle Township, Luzerne County. The approximately 1.1-mile long extension would involve the construction of a four-lane roadway from the current termination of the beltway just west of I-81 to Commerce Drive.

A copy of the EA is available at the following locations.

FHWA
Pennsylvania Division
Division Administrator
228 Walnut Street, Room 508, Harrisburg, PA 17101-1720

Department of Transportation
Engineering District 4-O
55 Keystone Industrial Park Rd, Dunmore, PA 18512

Hazleton Area Public Library
55 N Church St, Hazleton, PA 18201

Hazle Township Supervisors Office
101 West 27th Street, Hazleton, Pennsylvania, 18202

The EA is also available for review online at: http://www.penndot.gov/RegionalOffices/district-4/ConstructionsProjectsAndRoadwork/Pages/default.aspx

Hard copies can be obtained by contacting the PennDOT Project Manager Susan Williams at (570) 963-4253.

Written comments may be submitted by email to susawillia@pa.gov, or by mail to;

PA Department of Transportation
Liaison Unit
Engineering District 4-O
55 Keystone Industrial Park, Dunmore, PA 18512

All written comments must be received by 5:00 p.m., February 19, 2018

Interested parties who want to request a public hearing should send a written request for public hearing to the District Executive within 15 days (February 4) at the address below.

PA Department of Transportation
Liaison Unit
Engineering District 4-O
55 Keystone Industrial Park, Dunmore, PA 18512

Attention: George J. Roberts, District Executive

Requests received within the 15 days may be resolved by contact with the interested party and resolving the issues on an individual basis. If two or more unresolved requests remain, a public hearing will be scheduled.
ATTACHMENT C

Errata to the Environmental Assessment
Environmental Assessment for the S.R. 0424, Section 390 Hazleton Beltway Extension  
Errata Sheet (March 16, 2018)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment No.</th>
<th>Commenter</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Project Team Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tracey Librandi Mumma. Pennsylvania Game Commission Environmental Planning &amp; Habitat Protection Division. Received via email: <a href="mailto:tlibrandi@pa.gov">tlibrandi@pa.gov</a></td>
<td>Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Hazelton Beltway Extension Environmental Assessment. The PGC only has one comment related to information found on Page 35 of the document. A sentence currently incorrectly states the status of Indiana bats and incorrectly species the scientific name. The sentence, &quot;Subsequent coordination with these agencies revealed the need to conduct habitat assessments for the state threatened Myotis leibii (eastern small-footed bat), the federally threatened Myotis sodalis (Indiana bat) and Myotis septentrionalis (northern long-eared bat)&quot; should be corrected to (changes highlighted in BOLD), &quot;Subsequent coordination with these agencies revealed the need to conduct habitat assessments for the state threatened <em>Myotis leibii</em> (eastern small-footed bat), the federally endangered <em>Myotis sodalis</em> (Indiana bat) and <em>federally threatened Myotis septentrionalis</em> (northern long-eared bat). It appears that elsewhere in the document the species' statuses are correctly identified.</td>
<td>We agree with this comment and this Errata Sheet will reflect the recommended change on Page 35 of the EA text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comment No.</td>
<td>Commenter</td>
<td>Comments</td>
<td>Project Team Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2           | Megan Pulver. PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Forestry, Natural Heritage Section. Received via email: mpulver@pa.gov | Please find below DCNR’s comments pertaining to the Environmental Assessment for the subject project.  
- In the final design phase, consider steepened slopes to minimize cut and fill impacts to the ridgetop dwarf-tree forest community. Also consider minimizing the footprint of clearing and grubbing activities within this forest community. If possible, avoid placing equipment staging areas or other temporary access areas in this community.  
- In addition to the previously recommended conservation measures for invasive species prevention (Table 17), consider additional BMPs found in PennDOT Publication 756, Invasive Species Best Management Practices.  

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project. | We agree with this comment and this Errata Sheet will reflect the additional recommended mitigation notes for Table 17 of the EA. |
Environmental Assessment for the S.R. 0424, Section 390 Hazleton Beltway Extension
Errata Sheet (March 16, 2018)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment No.</th>
<th>Commenter</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Project Team Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 3           | Barbara Rudnick, NEPA Review Coordinator/Program Manager. U.S. EPA Region III, Office of Environmental Programs. Received via letter. | Comments were provided regarding **Geologic Features, Surface Waters, Stormwater Management, Forest Land & Natural Resources, Environmental Justice, and Air & Noise**. Responses to these comments are provided in the *EA Comment Response Document*. Comments to which would require edits to the EA are noted below.  

**A. Forested Land and Natural Resources:** The EA recommends mitigation measures to avoid and minimize impacts to the federally listed endangered Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*), plant species of special concern, and the Ridgetop Dwarf-Tree Forest (RDTF), a Pennsylvania community of special concern, which qualifies as “Natural Resources Meriting Compensation” under the 2007 Natural Resources Assessment and Mitigation Agency Partnering Policy. We recommend the Final EA or future design include additional mitigation measures to compensate for unavoidable impacts to RDTF and its buffer areas. It would be helpful to include the referenced 2007 policy document in the appendices of the Final EA for review. | Coordination with DCNR was completed during the Draft EA Phase. This Errata Sheet will reflect the recommended addition of the 2007 Natural Resources Assessment and Mitigation Agency Partnering Policy in the FONSI. |
### B. Air Quality and Noise

EPA recommends including the Federal Register citation (58 FR 62188) for the final transportation conformity rule, as well as citations to the CFR. We recommend referring to this rule as the “transportation conformity rule” and its requirements as “transportation conformity requirements,” to differentiate from general conformity requirements. We suggest the following edits:

a. “A final transportation conformity rule was first issued by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on November 24, 1993 (58 FR 62188), as part of the 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) -51. The transportation conformity rule can be found in 40 Code Federal Regulations (CFR) 51.390 and part 93, subpart A.”

b. EPA recommends adding ozone (O₃) and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) to the title of “Carbon Monoxide (CO) and Particulate Matter (PM₂₅ and PM₁₀)” under “Existing Conditions,” to include all criteria pollutants established in the transportation conformity rule.

c. EPA recommends including a reference to 40 CFR 81.339 in the discussion of Luzerne County, PA attaining the NAAQS. EPA also recommends citing CFR in the explanation of why the transportation conformity rule does not apply to the project. We suggest the following edits:

Luzerne County has been designated in 40 CFR 81.339 as “attainment” for all regional air pollutants (as well as all criteria pollutants); therefore, per 40 CFR 93.102(b), the transportation conformity requirements, as outlined in the Clean Air Act and 40 CFR 51.390 and part 93, subpart A, do not apply to this project.”

---

**Project Team Response**

We agree with these edits and this Errata Sheet will reflect the recommended changes in Appendix C, Sections B (Air Quality) and C (Noise Evaluation).
### Comment Sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment No.</th>
<th>Commenter</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Project Team Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><strong>Jennifer Kagel</strong>, Fishery Biologist. U.S. Fish &amp; Wildlife Service, Pennsylvania Field Office. Received via email: <a href="mailto:jennifer.kagel@fws.gov">jennifer.kagel@fws.gov</a></td>
<td>Thank you for the opportunity to review the EA for the Hazelton Beltway Extension. In the hopes that you we able to resolve the editorial comments submitted by the PA Game Commission, we have no further comments.</td>
<td>We agree with this comment and this Errata Sheet will reflect the recommended change on Page 35 of the EA text.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

March 16, 2018