



# PENNDOT, PA. TURNPIKE, RIDC OF SOUTHWESTERN PA TO COLLABORATE ON STATE-OF-THE-ART SAFETY, TRAINING AND RESEARCH FACILITY



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This quarterly newsletter highlights our latest efforts to improve mobility and quality of life in Pennsylvania.

As always, feel free to send story ideas or requests for information you want to see. If you’re involved in an interesting or innovative project or initiative, have ever wondered about other parts of PennDOT’s operations or have other suggestions, email the Communications Office at [DOTcomm@pa.gov](mailto:DOTcomm@pa.gov).

**We hope you enjoy this latest issue!**

# PENNDOT HONORS ITS 2022 STARS OF EXCELLENCE

By Mandi Mladenoff, Communications Office Intern



Each year, PennDOT recognizes select employees for their outstanding performance in providing the very best transportation services to Pennsylvanians every day. Recently, 29 employees from around the state were given a Star of Excellence Award, the agency's highest recognition.

This year an event was held at the Governor's Residence to honor the winners on Aug. 23. View photos from the event on Flickr at <https://flic.kr/s/aHBqjA68GE>.

"Looking at the dedication and achievements of each Star makes me so grateful to be part of the PennDOT family and to be a Pennsylvanian who benefits from their services," said PennDOT Secretary Yassmin Gramian.

Check out descriptions of our Stars' achievements on the PennDOT Way Bog featured on October 17, 2022. See how the day-to-day work of exceptional individuals spells great success for PennDOT: significant savings for taxpayers, improved service delivery, and advancements in safety and productivity.

Winners of the 2022 Star of Excellence Awards are listed below.

## District 1

- **Michael L. Hanna**  
Transportation Construction Inspector Supervisor
- **Todd D. Palmer**  
Senior Civil Engineer Supervisor

## District 2

- **Amanda J. Nelson**  
Assistant Highway Maintenance Manager
- **Jason J. Powell**  
Maintenance Operations Manager

## District 3

- **Marc A. Blair**  
Transportation Construction Manager 1
- **Laurie Cristini**  
Civil Engineer

## District 4

- **Robert McGavin**  
Highway Foreman 2
- **Summer T. Koziel, E.I.T.**  
Senior Civil Engineer Supervisor

## District 5

- **John D. Bohman**  
District Permit Coordinator
- **Matthew E. Seasock**  
Highway Foreman II

## District 6

- **Tia Martin**  
Roadway Programs Technician 2
- **Steven N. Bartkovich**  
Civil Engineer Manager

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### District 8

- **Robert Stanisic**  
Transportation Construction Inspector Supervisor
- **Matthew E. McDeavitt**  
Civil Engineer Manager

### District 9

- **Anne Stich**  
Transportation Planning Manager
- **Rodney B. Hill**  
District Permit Manager

### District 10

- **Karen L. Burkett**  
Assistant Highway Maintenance Manager
- **Amanda L. Olbeter**  
Senior Civil Engineer Supervisor

### District 11

- **Shane Szalankiewicz, P.E.**  
District Bridge Engineer
- **Jesse Kovacs**  
Roadway Programs Technician 2



### District 12

- **Michael Shipley**  
TEOS Operator and Acting Foreman
- **Jeremy Hughes**  
Senior Civil Engineer Manager/District Bridge Engineer

### Central Office

- **Andrew Batson, AICP**  
Division Chief – Planning and Project Delivery, Multimodal Transportation
- **Monty S. Frank**  
Business Analyst 2, Driver & Vehicle Services
- **Guozhou Li, P.E.**  
Assistant Chief Bridge Engineer, Highway Administration
- **Troy J. Love**  
Transportation Planning Specialist Supervisor,
- **Todd Rottet**  
Transportation Planning Specialist 2, Planning
- **Meghan M. McNaughton**  
Assistant Counsel, Office of Chief Counsel
- **Aaron Carr**  
Administrative Assistant, Administration



# REHABILITATED TILGHMAN STREET BRIDGE OPENS IN ALLENTOWN

By Ronald J. Young Jr., Community Relations Coordinator, District 5

This summer, PennDOT District 5 staff were joined by elected officials, business leaders and owners, and hundreds of people for a block party on the rehabilitated Tilghman Street Bridge over the Lehigh River, Norfolk Southern Railroad, waterfront development and local streets in the City of Allentown, Lehigh County.

"We are pleased to open this signature structure," District Executive Michael W. Rebert said. "And we thank everyone for their patience while the bridge was closed."

The Tilghman Street Bridge was closed to vehicular traffic in January 2018 to allow the bridge to be rehabilitated.

The bridge rehabilitation work included deck replacement, roadway approach reconstruction, lighting upgrades, drainage work, concrete curb and sidewalk upgrades, signing and pavement markings and other miscellaneous construction.

The Tilghman Street Bridge is a 12-span concrete open spandrel arch bridge originally constructed in 1929 and rehabilitated in 1995. It is 1,387 feet long and 53 feet wide. This section of Tilghman Street has an average daily traffic of 17,398 vehicles.

D.A. Collins Construction Co., Inc. of Wilton, NY, was the general contractor on the \$24,990,570 project.

The Block Party was organized by Executive Education Academy Charter School and the City of Allentown.

Several East Side Allentown businesses and organizations participated in the event including: First Commonwealth Credit Union, Gummy Bears Learning Center, Bull & Bear Restaurant, AW Driving School, Iron Pigs Baseball, Center for Humanistic



Change, Puerto Rican Culture Preservation, Tool 4 Success, Louis E. Dieruff High School, Community Services for Children, Lehigh Valley Children's Center, Pennsylvania Career Link, Linton's Food Management, Department of Human Services, BLVD Carwash, Punta Cana Restaurant, The Vegan Butcher Restaurant, Action Party Rental, Fifi's Ice Cream Truck, CVS Pharmacy, Jaiindl Enterprises, Adams Outdoor Advertising and Jeldes Automotive Services LLC.

Attendees were able to enjoy games, giveaways, and a presentation of vehicles from The NB Center for American Automotive Heritage, America on Wheels, and Lehigh Valley Car Meets & Car Shows.

# STATEWIDE BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN COORDINATOR - TRISH MEEK

By Susan Heimberger, Executive Assistant, Multimodal Transportation

On June 11, 2022, PennDOT and the Multimodal Deputate welcomed Patricia (Trish) Meek as the new Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator.



Trish joins PennDOT after 27 years as a Senior Transportation Planner for the Centre Regional Planning Agency (CRPA). In her role at CRPA, Trish helped municipalities secure funding for numerous projects, including streetscape, sidewalk, and shared use path projects throughout the Centre Region. Trish was also a guiding force in developing an active transportation community in the Centre Region, assisting the municipalities in completing plans and official maps focused on bicycles and

recreation, and working with several external bike advocacy groups and organizations to promote bicycling activities.

One of Trish's signature accomplishments was leading a collaborative effort to have the Centre Region designated as a Bicycle Friendly Community by the National League of American Bicyclists (LAB), initially at the Bronze level, and then most recently at the Silver level. Trish also facilitated the LAB's designation of the Centre Region Council of Governments and other entities as Bicycle Friendly Businesses.

As the Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator, Trish will advocate within PennDOT and with external partners across Pennsylvania to implement policies, legislation, engineering solutions, and educational and funding programs supporting people who walk and bike, with a focus on those who do so out of necessity rather than choice.

# KATE KOHAN, FIRST WOMAN IN DAUPHIN COUNTY TO HOLD HER POSITION

By Mandi Mladenoff, Communications Office Intern

Kate Kohan, the Senior Highway Maintenance Manager in Dauphin County, is the first woman to hold the position in the county.



“My experience as a woman in a male dominated industry is shockingly not horrible or anything like that,” she said.

“I’ve had nothing but positive experiences back from when I was an intern on the crew with a bunch of guys to now when I’m sitting in meetings with all my other managers, with district staff. I haven’t had any experiences where it’s been negative, or I felt different because I was a woman.”

Kohan started her career with PennDOT in 2007 as an intern in Lancaster County working on Bridge Crew. From there, once out of school, she was hired full time as a stock clerk in Lancaster. In 2016, she moved to Dauphin as the roadway programs coordinator.

Kohan is now in her 7th position within PennDOT. In her current role, she oversees operations spanning 556.5 miles of state roads and 447 state-owned bridges within the county, as well as long-term planning, budgeting, and handles complaints from legislators and the public.

“My favorite thing about working at PennDOT is honestly just the relationships that I’ve built over the years. We have a great group of people,” she said. “We have a great atmosphere; we all get along. We get our job done, but we do it in a way that makes people want to work here.”

Kohan was quick to mention her predecessor Dale Good, now Assistant District Executive for Maintenance in Dauphin County, as someone that she considered to be her mentor at

PennDOT. She says he gave her new opportunities to expand her knowledge and pushed her to strive for the position she’s in now. Good continues as her supervisor and mentor now.

“When you have a career, and you think you know where you want to get to, he was very good at saying, ‘Well maybe you just need to take this other path,’” she said. “It’s not always straight forward. You can step off to come back, and he really pushed me to do that.”

Kohan cares a lot about her employees and coworkers. When she started at PennDOT, she was surprised by the general perception of the public.

“Some people think that we are just driver’s licenses or we’re just filling potholes. They don’t realize that we have entire units dedicated to traffic, design, and construction, to improve our roadways,” she said. “The general perception of what the public thinks we do versus what we actually do, especially in maintenance. The understanding of how the work is done and how it’s perceived has been really eye-opening. Trying to change those attitudes as best as I can one person at a time.”

Outside of work, Kohan enjoys hanging out with her dog, a 9-year-old Lab-Pit mix, and her husband who is an assistant manager for PennDOT in Berks County. She also enjoys trying new fun things with friends, trying new recipes, and having themed parties.

Kohan concluded: “I wish the general public knew that all our people out there- plowing the snow, picking up litter, filling the potholes – they all have lives outside of here. I wish that they would just pay more attention to our signs, drive a little slower. It’s scary when our guys are out there. They do put their lives on the line every day. I just wish there was more of a connection there. That people understood that and took the extra care. I want to see everyone go home safe at night.”

## PENNDOT PARTNERS WITH PSP AND PTC TO URGE RESPONSIBLE, SAFE DRIVING AND “PUT THE BRAKES ON FATALITIES”



PennDOT partners with the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) and the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission (PTC) to encourage all Pennsylvania motorists to take responsibility for safety on our roadways and help “Put the Brakes on Fatalities.”

In 2019, traffic fatalities dropped to 1,059, the lowest since record keeping began in 1928. In 2020, even with less roadway traffic, fatalities increased to 1,129. In 2021, and in line with trends seen across the nation, traffic fatalities increased again, jumping by about 9% to 1,230.

“Pennsylvania is not alone in seeing an increase in roadway deaths, but that doesn’t make it OK,” said PennDOT Secretary Yassmin Gramian. “In fact, everyone should find it unacceptable. Many traffic fatalities are completely preventable. We must work together – safety is everyone’s responsibility. We urge all drivers to follow these simple safety steps today and always: pay attention when you are behind the wheel, never drive impaired, slow down, and buckle up.”

To learn more about PennDOT’s safety initiatives, visit [www.PennDOT.pa.gov/Safety](http://www.PennDOT.pa.gov/Safety).

## MEET "BIG G"

By Ronald J. Young Jr., Community Relations Coordinator, District 5

Any employee or visitor to the first floor of the District 5 office knows when Ed is in the office that day. Whether it be the air fried chicken he might be cooking in the morning to maybe even steamed crabs at lunch, Ed "Big G" Baranski leaves an indelible mark on the District office through his culinary skills, a mark that is unmistakably Big G.



In his nine years with PennDOT's District 5's Human Resource Unit as a HR Assistant II and Management Analyst II if you have had the pleasure to speak with Ed, you would know that his passion for cooking isn't everything to him, in fact it is dwarfed by fondness of cars and his complete devotion to his dogs.

In the arena of automobiles, Ed's first car was a 1964 ½ Mustang. While that car was a lot of fun, the real enjoyment came from his next vehicle. When Ed was 17 a State Constable sold him a 1977 Plymouth Gran Fury Police Interceptor from California. The Magnum 440 4bbl Interceptor clearly demonstrated that an American muscle car could pin someone to the seat as it accelerated. "I still get a chill when I hear the Interceptor open up in one of the cars in Beverly Hills Cop during a chase scene," said Baranski.

Since those early years, Ed has owned many cars including several Broncos and an '82 and '06 Corvette, the latter which he still owns and cruises with. Ed isn't sure about his next vehicle as far as a daily driver, but his love of American muscle cars won't leave him.

Ed's first love however is his dogs. He has had several as a boy in Philadelphia, but his understanding of how to train them properly was developed when he married a police officer in 2004 in Montgomery County. She was a K9 officer and an expert trainer for many years while on duty.

By Ed's count he has raised and loved 19 dogs and while they all have a special place in his heart, none stand out above "K9 Viper," a 12-year-old Dutch Shepherd to which Ed has a special bond. He also has very strong emotions and memories for "K9 Dargo." Dargo was the 7th ranked dog in the country in 2001 and was called by the FBI to report to New York on 9/11. Dargo's work in New York ended up taking his life due to the amount of exposure of the debris. With Ed's ability to reach the right people, the Pennsylvania House of Representatives and President Bush both issued citations to honor Dargo and Ed's wife for their work and sacrifice.

Ed loves spending time with his dogs, but he particularly enjoys keeping their skills in tip top shape. Every now and then Ed will put on the bite suit and let the trained K9s have at it. "It's awesome to watch Viper get all amped up when he sees me start to put it on. Even at 12 years old he acts like he is 3 or 4," said Baranski. Ed might get tuned up a little, but he's never been seriously injured. His wife however did have an unfortunate encounter once where one of the dogs literally ripped off her thumb.

While at the age of 56, Ed "Big G" Baranski might be getting closer to retiring to his property in Florida, he's not slowing down yet. He has more cars to buy, more dogs to train and more meals to cook!

## PENNSYLVANIA RECEIVED \$25.4 MILLION FROM BIDEN ADMINISTRATION FOR ELECTRIC VEHICLE INFRASTRUCTURE

Pennsylvania is one of the first in the nation to be approved for the first round of \$171 million in infrastructure funds.

Pennsylvania's been awarded \$25.4 million to invest in clean transportation through the state's plan for electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure deployment. Pennsylvania is one of the first states in the nation to be approved for this first round of funding under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL).

The federal funding is part of a new National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Formula Program under the BIL that provides Pennsylvania more than \$170 million over the next five years to support EV infrastructure. The Pennsylvania NEVI Plan will be administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT).

There are more than 31,000 EVs registered in Pennsylvania, nearly triple the roughly 9,700 that were registered in March 2019.

The Wolf Administration has been making investments into EV infrastructure for years through programs like Driving PA



Forward, which provides grants and rebates for chargers, and the Alternative Fuels Incentive Grant program that provides grants to EV and other alternative fuel infrastructure.

The NEVI Formula Program provides dedicated funding to Pennsylvania and other states to strategically deploy EV charging infrastructure and establish an interconnected network to facilitate data collection, access, and reliability. Initially, funding under this program is directed to designated Alternative Fuel Corridors (AFCs) for build-out of a national EV charging network, particularly along the Interstate Highway System to support long distance travel.

# GOVERNOR WOLF, PRESIDENT BIDEN VISIT FERN HOLLOW BRIDGE, EMPHASIZE IMPORTANCE OF INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING



Governor Tom Wolf joined President Biden at the Fern Hollow Bridge in Pittsburgh last month to highlight the importance of investing in infrastructure and the impacts of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law on Pennsylvania's transportation network.

The Fern Hollow Bridge, which is owned by the City of Pittsburgh and carries Forbes Avenue over Frick Park, Fern Hollow Creek and Tranquil Trail, collapsed on the morning of January 28, 2022. The cause of the collapse is still under investigation by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB).

Immediately following the collapse, Gov. Wolf and Mayor Gainey issued Declaration of Disaster Emergency Proclamations, which allowed the City of Pittsburgh to enter into a legal agreement to allow the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) to manage the design and construction of the new Fern Hollow Bridge. The proclamations also provided the Federal Highway Administration and PennDOT the approval to immediately contract with Swank Construction Company and HDR Inc. for the removal of the collapsed structure, and the design and construction of the new Fern Hollow Bridge.

Thanks to collaboration with the City of Pittsburgh and PennDOT's innovative approach to the standard design process, multiple design phases occurred simultaneously including foundation, substructure, superstructure, utility

relocation, environmental and aesthetic aspects of the project, which allowed project delivery to be expedited by multiple years. The bridge is expected to open to traffic by the end of 2022 – less than a year after the collapse.

Substructure and superstructure work have been completed on the new bridge, and concrete deck placement work is expected to conclude by late October. Bridge barrier installation, the completion of abutment and wingwalls, and roadway tie-ins to the bridge are anticipated to be finished by late December to allow the bridge to open to a single-lane of bi-directional traffic while work continues into early 2023.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), signed by President Biden in November 2021, allowed PennDOT to quickly dedicate \$25.3 million in federal funds to the project without impacting other critical regional needs.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will bring \$4 billion in new highway and bridge funds to Pennsylvania over the next five years, nearly \$600 million in this federal fiscal year alone. These new funds have allowed many important transportation projects to advance across Pennsylvania.

Information on the construction of the new Fern Hollow Bridge can be found on PennDOT's website. To learn more about transportation investments across Pennsylvania, visit [projects.PennDOT.gov](https://projects.PennDOT.gov).



# I-95 SECTION GR4: NEARING THE END OF CONSTRUCTION

By Brad Rudolph, Deputy Communications Director 2, District 6



PennDOT's contractor will complete ground-level improvements beneath the interstate at the Girard Avenue Interchange by the end of November, wrapping up nearly nine years of construction to rebuild Interstate 95 at the interchange, completing Sections GR3 and GR4, the most expansive sections of PennDOT's GIR project.

Following completion of the southbound viaduct and median area earlier this year, workers this fall will finish ground-level improvements beneath the new viaducts that were part of the Section GR3 and GR4 contracts. These improvements include the creation of a variety of public spaces, including a multi-use trail that will be incorporated into the Delaware River Greenway that stretches along the waterfront. Cobblestone pathways, dyed concrete pavement, rain gardens, rock-lined drainage basins, strips of planted grass areas, benches, trees, pedestrian-friendly LED lighting and small public parking areas are among the public amenities being installed under I-95 between Palmer Street in Fishtown and Ann Street in Port Richmond.

Section GR4 construction began in 2018 and focused on rebuilding the southbound side of I-95. The southbound

viaduct between Palmer and Ann streets was replaced, new southbound on-off ramps were built at Girard Avenue, and noise barrier walls with clear panels were installed along southbound I-95 and Aramingo Avenue.

Underground utilities along Aramingo Avenue also were relocated, and street trees and painted bike lanes were completed on Richmond Street during this section.

Additional improvements included constructing sustainable enhancements adjacent to and beneath I-95, including low-maintenance landscaping, urban stormwater management devices, public spaces, LED street and understructure lighting, and thematic form liners for decorative treatment of bridge abutment walls. Three retaining walls also were constructed on each side of the highway to support embankments along the interstate.

PennDOT has invested more than \$660 million since 2009 rebuilding this section of I-95 in Philadelphia. Two additional project sections, GR5 and GR6, will complete the reconstruction of I-95 from Allegheny Avenue to the Interstate 676 Interchange between 2023 and 2029.

# STATE TRANSPORTATION INNOVATION COUNCIL RESUMES IN-PERSON MEETINGS, MARKS 10TH ANNIVERSARY

By PennDOT Bureau of Innovations

Pennsylvania is moving aggressively to embrace a future where electric vehicles play an important and critical role in meeting transportation needs. An update on Pennsylvania's approach was the highlight of the State Transportation Innovation Council (STIC) business meeting on July 27 in Harrisburg.

PennDOT Secretary Yassmin Gramian, P.E., noted that it was the first in-person STIC meeting since November 2019, and she applauded STIC and Technical Advisory Group (TAG) members for continuing to pursue critically needed innovations despite challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I am thrilled to be with everyone here talking about innovation," she said in her opening remarks. "It's amazing how much we have accomplished."

Secretary Gramian noted how all areas of PennDOT pursued better ways to serve the public in the face of the pandemic-generated challenges, such as with improved multimodal transportation, and driver and vehicle services initiatives.

"We are looking at a lot of things to strengthen the organization and be more creative and provide opportunities for everyone," the Secretary said.

The meeting marked the STIC's 10th anniversary and former PennDOT Secretary Barry Schoch, who was instrumental in the STIC's formation, offered a video tribute. Updates were provided on three successful and long-standing STIC innovations: the Salt and Snow Management Course for local governments, Geosynthetic Reinforced Soil-Integrated Bridge Systems and High Friction Surface Treatments.

The meeting also recognized outgoing and incoming TAG Leaders and featured updates on Augmented Reality in Transportation, a 2020 FHWA STIC Incentive Program funding recipient, Digital As-Builts, an Every Day Counts Round 6 (EDC-6) innovation, PennDOT's Digital Delivery Directive 2025 (3D2025) and the Lane Reservation System, an innovation currently moving through the STIC Innovation Development Process.

The Augmented Reality in Transportation initiative is looking at five different technologies that combine virtual and real worlds, provide real-time interaction and accurate 3D registration of virtual and real objects, to improve communication between field and office employees, and assist with construction inspection, structural material shop inspections, bridge inspections and incident management, as well as training and certifying bridge inspection staff.

PennDOT's Digital Delivery Directive 2025 (3D2025) aims to transition PennDOT from 2D plan sheets to 3D models, building deliverables that are human-readable and machine-readable at the same time, with the goal to use digital data throughout the project lifecycle. Digital delivery improves design quality, which reduces risk and project costs, and



increases construction efficiency. It also captures and improves as-built asset information and records. As part of the EDC-6 Digital As-Builts innovation, PennDOT rolled out various pilot studies focusing on different areas, including guiderails, Existing Ground Confidence, bridge authoring, and drainage authoring to support the overall goal of 3D2025.

The Lane Reservation System innovation seeks to reduce work zone conflicts and congestion and improve work zone safety as well as traveler safety by implementing a system comparable to the restaurant reservation system OpenTable. The system will identify the effects of different types of work zones at various days of the week and times of the days and determine whether the work zone can be scheduled for the requested date and time. The system will be built using OpenStreetMap to allow use for local roads in the future.

Referencing the advances Pennsylvania is making to clear the way for further development of the infrastructure needed to support more widespread use of Electric Vehicles (EVs), Secretary Gramian stated that "Pennsylvania is well positioned to support EVs."

Natasha Fackler, PennDOT's Infrastructure Investment Coordinator, provided a detailed update Pennsylvania's plan for implementing the federally-required Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Formula Program (NEVI), by first noting that the number of EVs registered in Pennsylvania has climbed to 31,022 from 9,784 in 2019.

She said Pennsylvania is in line for \$171.5 million over the next five years through the NEVI program, which was authorized under the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law signed by President Biden.

Fackler noted that Pennsylvania has also identified Alternative Fuel Corridors (AFCs) where charging stations will be located, including on all the interstates in Pennsylvania and portions of U.S. Routes 1, 15, 30 and 422.

Pennsylvania has conducted surveys and worked with stakeholders on its NEVI plan, which was submitted to the federal government in July 2022. A response was required by Oct. 1, 2022, Fackler said.

# INNOVATIONS CHAMPIONED BY STATE TRANSPORTATION INNOVATION COUNCIL TRANSLATE INTO BETTER SERVICES FOR PENNSYLVANIA

By PennDOT Bureau of Innovations

A safety road countermeasure that dramatically cut fatal and injury crashes.

A more efficient and cost-effective way for local governments to replace bridges that expanded to include all of PennDOT.

A better approach to cutting intersection crashes and improving traffic flow at expressway interchanges.

Expanding knowledge about how to better address winter storms, saving time and money for local governments.

These are among the top success stories stemming from the 10-year history of the State Transportation Innovation Council (STIC).

The key leaders at PennDOT and partner agencies who were responsible for these innovations recently were interviewed by Steve Chizmar, director of PennDOT's Bureau of Innovations, for a series of podcasts celebrating the STIC's milestone.

"Innovation is extremely important," said Joe Szczur, P.E., the long-time district executive in PennDOT's Uniontown-based District 12. He now is director of the University of Pittsburgh's Center for Sustainable Transportation Infrastructure and also serves as a member of the STIC.

"If you are not innovating, you are falling behind," he added during the podcast interview.

Taxpayers are investing in a better transportation system, and the STIC helps provide "peace of mind that your tax dollars are being put to practice and being used very efficiently," he said.

Before the institution of the STIC, he added, it was questionable whether good ideas had a process to move forward. With STIC, there is a "forum that again encourages employees and gives them the confidence that they can bring up an idea." Giving it the formal presence the STIC does is the way advancements are being made, and our folks deserve the best, and that is what it's getting with the STIC," he said. "It's been great to be part of."

Szczur was joined on the podcast by his former District 12 colleague, Rachel Duda, P.E., assistant district executive for design. Both were instrumental in the adoption of the Diverging Diamond Interchanges (DDI) and Roundabouts innovations, both part of the Federal Highway Administration's Every Day Counts Round 2 (EDC-2) Intersection and Interchange Geometrics innovation. The DDI installed along Interstate 70 in District 12 was the state's first. Two additional DDIs have been completed in PennDOT District 8 at the Shrewsbury interchange of Interstate 83 in York County, and the U.S. Route 222/U.S. Route 322 interchange in Lancaster County.



Duda, who also was leader of the STIC's Technical Advisory Group (TAG) for Design for the past three years, referenced the safety impact of the DDI innovation.

"Total crashes were down 46 percent the first year, and left-turn crashes were down 72 percent," she said. "And really what DDI does and what roundabouts do, they eliminate a lot of the conflict points. Eliminating conflict points makes it harder (for drivers) to make a bad decision."

Among the DDI features are moving the crossroad traffic to the opposite side of the roadway at the on and off ramps to the interchange, which eliminates left turns across oncoming traffic. A Roundabouts flows traffic into a circular motion that eliminates the usual intersection cross traffic.

Duda said she had a great experience as the Design TAG Leader.

"Any time you bring an innovation to your TAG, you are sharing an idea that someone believes can save time, money or even lives," she said. "In reality, that is the main goal of PennDOT and the STIC."

Saving lives was the big impetus for the High Friction Surface Treatment (HFST) innovation. Joining the podcast were two PennDOT leaders who played a critical role in its advancement: Jason Hershock, manager of PennDOT's Safety Engineering and Risk Management Unit, and Neil Hood, safety engineer for PennDOT's District 9, based in Hollidaysburg.

"Lane departures in Pennsylvania are responsible for 50 to 54 percent of all fatal crashes in the commonwealth, a pretty big number," Hershock said. Two-lane roads with curves make up about 10 to 15 percent of the state's roadway network, but account for over 50 percent of highway fatalities, he added.

Working through the STIC, PennDOT's District 5 in Allentown did a pilot with the first application of HFST on Route 611 in

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Northampton County. The process involved adding a layer of epoxy materials, such as bauxite and aggregates, on the top of the existing road surface, to increase friction. That helps prevent skidding, especially on wet pavements.

That stretch of Route 611 had 21 wet road crashes in just one direction between 1997 and 2005, said Hershock, who worked in the district and played a key role in the deployment. Between 2007 and 2015, all crashes were eliminated because of HFST, he added. Similar results have been seen statewide.

“We found the HFST worked great and reduced not just certain crashes ... it reduced all crash types. It was like the silver bullet of safety countermeasures,” he said.

Hood said his district also applied HFST to intersections in addition to curves.

“We are seeing a benefit here as well,” he noted. “We’ve had good success so far. We want to continue that.”

Hershock noted how FHWA, the construction industry and all elements of PennDOT collaborated to make HFST work across the state.

“All of us had to work hard to develop good construction standards, quality specialized materials, and be willing to work with contractors and material suppliers to ensure a quality product,” he said. “And it’s made a big difference. We haven’t had any major failures ...”

The long-term failure of a small, locally-owned bridge in Huston Township, Clearfield County, opened the door to using Geosynthetic Reinforced Soil– Integrated Bridge Systems (GRS-IBS) in Pennsylvania.

GRS-IBS is a low-cost alternative for short-span structures that local work forces or district maintenance forces can construct using readily available materials and without expensive construction equipment. Using this technique, these bridges can be completed in weeks instead of months, with costs 25 to 60 percent less than conventional methods.

“It’s one of the most satisfying achievements in my career at PennDOT,” said Randy Albert, P.E., municipal services supervisor in PennDOT’s District 2 based in Clearfield. He and Kristin Langer, P.E., assistant chief bridge engineer, joined the podcast to talk about the innovation, which was part of FHWA’s EDC-1.

“Part of my job at PennDOT in helping local governments is finding solutions to local road and bridge problems,” Albert said.

When trying to help the township deal with the long-term closure of one of its bridges, Albert remembered a FHWA presentation he had seen about GRS-IBS and proposed it to the township.

“There wasn’t any influx of funding or big grants to get it started,” Albert said. “There wasn’t a big study group or research group in Pennsylvania implementing a pilot program or anything like that.”

Albert pointed out to the township that the concept was experimental, and they couldn’t use state funds.

“We discussed the things that FHWA promoted: ease of construction, the economy in building it, the quick turnaround time in getting the bridge open. And since they wanted the bridge opened as quickly as possible, they decided to move forward.”

The project was so successful it generated widespread media coverage and garnered an innovation award from the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors (PSATS.)

Langer then entered the picture and was instrumental in developing specifications, explaining the concept and its benefits to her PennDOT colleagues and spreading the concept statewide.

“Specially, they recognized the cost savings, the ease of construction, the speed of construction and everybody mentioned the elimination of the bump at the end of the bridge if constructed properly,” Albert said. “That’s really how it got started. It just started out to be a solution to a problem and took on a life of its own.”

Langer said it was a challenge to get PennDOT district bridge engineers to buy into the concept.

“We overcame it basically the way we do most anything, by taking baby steps,” she said.

Working with FHWA, Langer worked to get specifications into PennDOT publications and manuals, and staged showcases for engineers and contractors to explain the concept. In 2018, FHWA STIC Incentive Program funding was awarded to underwrite extensive research that helped update the specifications for GRS-IBS bridges. Today, each PennDOT district has at least one GRS-IBS bridge, Langer said.

Looking ahead, GRS-IBS may be used for overpasses and to help deal with increased flooding impacts on bridges.

“We are starting to see and to be able to tout the benefits and tout the resiliency of those structures and carry that forward into the future to increase our resiliency on our bridges, especially in flooding situations,” Langer said.

Aside from helping municipalities with bridges, a STIC innovation also provided salt and winter management training and support.

Sam Gregory, technical expert for the Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP), and Karen Atkinson, program manager for PSATS, joined the podcast to talk about those efforts.

Atkinson noted that FHWA STIC Incentive Program funding, awarded in 2015, was the catalyst that helped accelerate development of the Salt and Snow Management Course now offered statewide to municipalities.

“We always had a vision of developing this course, but with budgets, it’s just one-by-one ... and it wasn’t really high on the list,” she said. “There were some other items we needed to take care of first. So, by having this funding, we were able to get this course out a lot sooner and help municipalities.”

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# VSL PILOT PROGRAM REDUCING SPEEDS, CRASHES IN DISTRICT 2

By Marla Fannin, Community Relations Coordinator, District 2

Severe winter weather conditions significantly reduce driver visibility. This reduced visibility coupled with drivers' tendencies to drive too fast for conditions greatly increases their chances of being involved in a crash. Implementing low cost, innovative infrastructure improvements to combat these issues are crucial to PennDOT's mission to reduce highway fatalities to zero by 2050, which is why District 2 recently implemented a pilot program that allows us to alert motorists of reduced speed limits on the interstate by way of Variable Speed Limit sign deployments.

The LED display on the unit alerts motorists to the normal posted speed limit in their deployment area under normal circumstances. In the event of severe winter weather, operators in the District's Regional Traffic Management Center can change the displays on the units remotely from their workstations and immediately alert drivers to a speed limit reduction. The units are equipped with flashers above and below the LED display and will be set to flash to draw extra attention in the event of a reduction.

During the pilot program, District 2 deployed 14 VSL units along its Interstate 80 corridor in Clearfield County. The signs were placed eastbound and westbound between mile markers 101 at the DuBois interchange and mile marker 123 at the Woodland interchange from February 2 through the end of the pilot study on March 12. During that timeframe, the District's Regional Traffic Management Center requested and was granted permission by the State Traffic Management Center to reduce the speed limit on I-80 from 70 miles per hour to 55 miles per hour on six different occasions.

Preliminary results are encouraging. INRIX speed data shows that drivers largely conformed and reduced their speeds significantly within the time periods the VSL's were activated and displaying reduced speed limit information. Additionally, the Crash Data Analysis Retrieval Tool (CDART) showed an 80



percent reduction in the number of crashes during those same time frames in 2021 and 2022. There were seven crashes in 2021 and just three in 2022.

The early successes of this pilot program prompted District 2 to purchase a total of 22 units for deployment in Clearfield and Clinton counties for the 2022-23 winter maintenance season. The 14 units deployed during the pilot were rentals. The deployment period will begin in October and conclude in April, and units will be stationed near existing permanent speed limit signs that will be covered during the period of the deployment.

The expansion of the program is not exclusive to District 2. Other areas with significant crash histories have been identified and will see deployments this winter as well. Districts 4, 5 and 8 will see a total of 36 units deployed (seven in Luzerne County; 24 in Schuylkill County; and five in Lebanon), District 10 will deploy six units between Clarion and Jefferson counties.

Since the units are portable, District 2 is evaluating the equipment for potential use in alerting motorists of crashes or summer maintenance projects such as seal coating or other slow-moving operations.

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Gregory said one goal was to present national and PennDOT best practices to municipal staff.

"We provided the knowledge to the locals to increase their level of service while at the same time saving them materials, which related to obviously saving money," he said.

By helping with calibration of spreaders and other efficiency steps, the courses had an impact, Gregory said, adding, "They noticed the savings in materials, and it saved them a lot of time, and they could get onto some of their other roads quicker. ... and they brought it to the point where they could upgrade a couple of their trucks to do pre-wetting, and when I would go back a year later, they would be upgrading their entire fleet."

Gregory noted that the coursework has to stay current.

"Winter maintenance operations is one of the public works activities that is constantly evolving," he said. "So obviously, any new technology that has come about after the original course, we've had to make sure it was updated to include all those changes."

The STIC's focus on innovation and collaboration to reach success is important, Atkinson said.

"STIC is definitely making a difference, and my goal from LTAP is to reach out to municipalities and work with locals so a lot of my involvement is having my ears open and trying to determine what ideas can be applied on the local level and making sure through LTAP we are also promoting the STIC innovations. For me, it's been a great outlet to learn about things."

# GROWING DEMAND LEADS TO DEVELOPMENT OF UPDATED AND NEW WINTER MAINTENANCE COURSES FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

By Mandi Mladenoff, Communications Office Intern



An ongoing partnership among PennDOT, the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors (PSATS) and PennDOT's Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) is working to enhance and develop new important winter maintenance training for local governments charged with delivering safe, passable roadways during winter events.

The original Salt and Snow Management Course was introduced as a State Transportation Innovation Council (STIC) innovation in 2015 with the goal of advancing partnerships and collaborations with local governments. The development of the original course was funded in partnership by LTAP and the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) STIC Incentive Program Funding.

"One of the main goals of the course when it was put together was to provide the municipalities with training on efficient and effective winter operations through the implementation of national and PennDOT best practices for salt applications," said Sam Gregory, an LTAP technical expert and course instructor. "By presenting the course, we've provided the knowledge to the locals to increase their level of service while at the same time saving them material, which relates obviously to saving money.

An updated and abbreviated Salt and Snow Management Course, now called Winter Maintenance 101, was offered for the first time in December 2020 in a virtual format, said Karen Atkinson, PSATS program manager. In 2021, there were 15 classes hosted with more than 300 participants.

Winter Maintenance 101 is focused on the operators' day-to-day work, such as planning and organization at a high level, focusing on equipment, materials and operational strategies, proper calibration of spreaders, understanding brine and pre-wetting.

"It originated just from the concept of wanting to help municipalities reduce the usage of salt on the roads," said

Atkinson. "So, it was taking the original course, which was part planning and part application, and trying to educate municipalities on some alternative uses for salt, and how to be better stewards of the environment and still meet the needs of the residents of having safe passages to their workplaces."

Currently, a Winter Maintenance 202 course is being developed to focus on preparing management for their roles in winter maintenance operations. This course is intended to run a half-day, similar to the 101 course.

"This course will be geared towards management. Emphasizing planning and preparation strategies, such as budgeting and workforce training, material procurement, etc. So, we can touch both the field personnel with Winter Maintenance 101, and we can touch the management and the supervisors with Winter Maintenance 202," said Gregory.

With the continuously evolving operations involved with winter maintenance, it's only natural that the courses would need to evolve as well. Pennsylvania is also a very diverse state with many different terrains. The courses need to accommodate all road features across the state.

"There were a lot of areas that still relied on anti-skid for their unpaved and low volume roads," said Gregory. "So, we had to add a module on anti-ski material, so we didn't lose the focus on those people, especially the ones in rural areas."

LTAP is continuing to offer the course yearly, receiving requests from municipalities every fall and sometimes into January, said Atkinson. The original Salt and Snow Management Course continues to evolve to provide knowledge and support to local municipalities, and advancements are being made to accommodate the vast array of participants.

# PENNDOT, PA. TURNPIKE, RIDC OF SOUTHWESTERN PA TO COLLABORATE ON STATE-OF-THE-ART SAFETY, TRAINING AND RESEARCH FACILITY

PennDOT, the Pa. Turnpike Commission, and the Regional Industrial Development Corporation (RIDC) of Southwestern PA are partnering on site planning and design for the Pennsylvania Safety, Transportation and Research Track, or PennSTART — a state-of-the-art facility envisioned to benefit emergency responders, transportation technology companies, and research institutions while supporting the local economy.

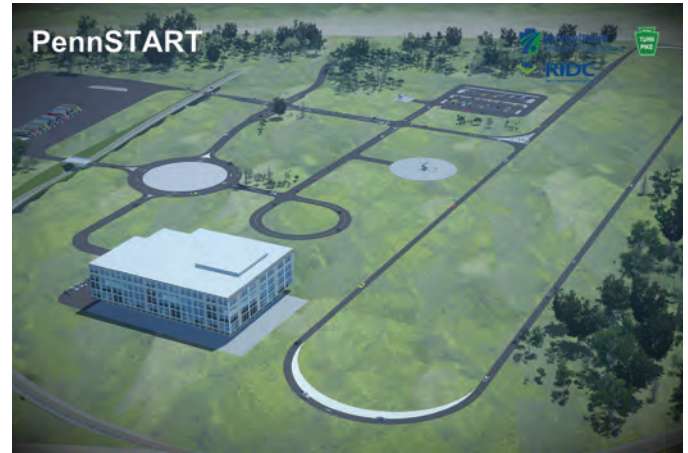
In addition to allowing Automated Vehicle (AV) testing and development, PennSTART's aim is to address safety, training, and research needs in six key areas: traffic incident management (TIM); tolling and intelligent transportation systems (ITS) technology; work zones; commercial vehicles; transit vehicles; and AV and other emerging technologies.

When a final agreement is reached, the facility would be built at and adjacent to the RIDC Westmoreland site in Mount Pleasant. Originally a 2.8 million-square-foot manufacturing facility, through state, local, non-profit, and private partnership, RIDC Westmoreland was converted into a multi-tenant advanced manufacturing complex home to over 1,000 jobs at AV companies, contract manufacturers, and more, as well as on-site workforce development provider Westmoreland Community College Advanced Technology Center.

Examples of technologies for which safety and operational testing as well as training could be conducted at the facility include:

- TIM training;
- testing and hands-on training for new ITS, tolling and signal equipment;
- safe, simulated training for higher-speed and mobile work-zone operations;
- safety certification training opportunities;
- simulated environments for temporary traffic control device testing and evaluation;
- smart truck-parking applications and other opportunities for commercial-vehicle technology partnerships; and
- controlled environments to test various AVs and other emerging technologies for transit buses, infrastructure equipment and other applications.

In studying TIM in Pennsylvania, a joint operational policy and other recommendations were identified in a Traffic Incident Management report by the Pennsylvania State Transportation Advisory Committee. Additionally, a feasibility study reviewing and identifying the need for a TIM training center was



conducted by the PTC with funding assistance through the Pennsylvania State Transportation Innovations Council, a collaboration among PennDOT, the PTC, Federal Highway Administration, and other transportation stakeholders.

The PennSTART facility represents the next in a series of steps that PennDOT, the PTC and other partners have taken to improve TIM. In 2016, the agencies held a TIM Summit with state agencies and dozens of responder groups to discuss and establish policies and partnerships to improve TIM in Pennsylvania. In January 2017, the Pennsylvania Traffic Incident Management Enhancement (PennTIME) initiative was formed, with five commonwealth agencies formalizing an interagency agreement in 2018. Since PennTIME was formed, over 20,000 responders have been trained in TIM compared to roughly 6,000 before PennTIME, ranking Pennsylvania third in the country for the total number of responders trained.

Building on the growing technology and AV industries in the region, PennSTART also aims to support jobs and business development. A report issued in September 2021 by the RIDC and the Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce found that "the estimated direct employment footprint of Pittsburgh's autonomy sector totals over 6,300 jobs" with "...an additional 8,604 full- or part-time indirect jobs" in the region dependent on the industry. The direct-employment footprint alone provides "an estimated \$651 million in labor income, [and] \$34.7 million in state and local tax revenues."

Additionally, the facility will meet one of the recommendations in the same regional report: "A multi-purpose, multi-user test and demonstration facility for autonomous mobile systems to be located within the City of Pittsburgh or close adjacent municipality that is highly convenient for use by the existing cluster of businesses, the university cluster in Oakland, and emerging entrepreneurial enterprises."

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# INNOVATION TO HELP INCREASE BRIDGE LONGEVITY MOVES FORWARD

By Mandi Mladenoff, Communications Office Intern



The health of Pennsylvania bridges is a top priority, and PennDOT continues to look for ways to increase the longevity of its more than 25,000 state-owned bridges.

Bridge Deck Link Slabs, a State Transportation Innovation Council (STIC) innovation, involves using a combination of Ultra-High Performance Concrete (UHPC) and reinforced steel to connect bridge decks and eliminate deck joints to reduce the damage and deterioration caused by water and de-icing materials leaking into the joints. The advancement of this innovation is being led by Mark Nicholson, district bridge engineer in PennDOT's District 1, located in the northwestern part of the state.

In 2020, District 1 conducted a pilot with Bridge Deck Link Slabs on the SR1009 bridge over Lake Wilhelm in Mercer County. The 181-foot bridge has three spans and was built in 1969. In the 28-day interim period until the asphalt overlay was applied, the link slab showed no signs of cracking or debonding from the adjacent deck and following a bridge inspection in June 2022, the inspectors rated the bridge deck "excellent and the superstructure very good," Nicholson said.

Link slabs are currently being used for a bridge on SR 2102 over Interstate 79. The project is in construction and is expected to be completed this fall, said Nicholson.



"Several other PennDOT districts have contacted me with questions on the use of link slabs and are considering them on their bridge projects," said Nicholson. "In our district, it will become a standard practice to consider them on all bridge projects, where applicable."

Currently, link slab installation on bridges should be funded through Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) funding. Installation costs do not typically impact bridge construction projects significantly, said Nicholson.

To further advance its usage in Pennsylvania, this innovation also received \$40,000 in Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) STIC Incentive Program funding in 2021.

"These funds are being used to develop a tool that will help designers evaluate the use of link slabs on their bridge projects," said Nicholson. "It will analyze the changes to the force effects on the bridge caused by the link slabs and determine if the effects are structurally acceptable, or if additional modifications to the structure are needed."

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AVs were born in Pennsylvania at Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) in Pittsburgh, and the university's work with this technology was highlighted by Dr. Raj Rajkumar of CMU.

CMU is among the eight companies authorized to test automated vehicles in Pennsylvania, with testing authorized for a total of 56 counties among all testers. Pennsylvania is among the nation's leaders in facilitating this industry's growth while considering the safety of all users. For example, in 2016 PennDOT assembled the Autonomous Vehicle Policy Task Force which issued a testing policy that same year. This government, industry, and stakeholder collaboration was

further formalized through Act 117 of 2018 which established the Highly Automated Vehicle Advisory Committee which "identifies recommendations for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania with the purpose of enhancing the safe and efficient movement of people and goods by advancing connected and automated vehicle technology."

Beyond technical discussions of safety, these groups are also focused on ensuring potential labor changes and opportunities are considered. The commonwealth is in active collaboration with local, national, and international experts on these topics for consultation while looking toward coming technological changes.



# HEADED TO A NEW HOME: PARTNERSHIPS SEND HISTORIC BRIDGE TO STATE PARK

By Jill Harry, Community Relations Coordinator, District 1



The historic Messerall Truss Bridge in Crawford County was on the move this year.

The 145-year-old metal bowstring truss, one of a very few of its kind left in the country, was lifted by crane as the first major step in refurbishing, repurposing, and rehomeing the structure.

It is a big step for the small bridge, which has been closed to traffic since 1987.

"This bridge has been on our radar for decades. It is no longer able to support motor vehicles, so finding the right fit was important to preserving it," said Don Burden, PennDOT Historic Preservation Specialist. "Watching the move was an amazing experience knowing what a longtime coming it was."

Since 1876, the bridge has been perched above Pine Creek in Oil Creek Township, Crawford County.

On August 10, 2021, that tenure came to an end as it was hoisted off its abutments and gently placed at a landing area on the grounds of Northwest Hardwoods a process that took a little over 20 minutes. From there it was dismantled and taken to a workshop for rehabilitation.

Next year, the bridge will be reassembled and outfitted with a wooden deck at its new home — Pymatuning State Park. It will then become part of the park's popular and expanding multi-use trail.

The work is a partnership between the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT).

"As part of our environmental process, we look at various ways to preserve historic bridges. Repurposing is one of those options," Burden said. "This particular structure was owned by Crawford County. The county recently transferred ownership

of the bridge to DCNR. We worked with the county and DCNR to create this partnership that helps all the parties while maintaining a piece of history. It is an outcome that was worth the wait."

Once in place at Pymatuning, the 103-foot bridge will carry the bike trail over Linesville Creek, an important link in the expansion plans at the park. The overall project includes resurfacing the existing path and constructing a new section that will increase the length of the trail from just over a mile to more than three miles.

"This project is important to the park. During the design phase, we heard from many members of the public who were happy we are to lengthening the trail into the nearby Borough of Linesville," said Dan Bickel, Pymatuning State Park manager. "To also include the Messerall Truss Bridge in the plan has made it that much more exciting."

The bowstring truss bridge was among the earliest metal truss bridge designs, and despite the number of them built mostly in the 1870s, Messerall is one of the last to remain standing. It was constructed by the Wrought Iron Bridge Company of Canton, Ohio, and was last rehabilitated in 1960.

The contractor on the trail project, including moving the bridge, is Horizon Construction Group Inc, of Sandy Lake, PA. The contract cost is \$2,289,000, which is being paid entirely with federal funds.

Information on the project, which will eventually include a video of the move, is available Pymatuning State Park Trail Project page on the district's website- [www.penndot.gov/District1](http://www.penndot.gov/District1).

The DCNR also shares information on their Pymatuning State Park Facebook page.

# PENNDOT CELEBRATES THE SUCCESS OF ROUNDABOUTS

Roundabouts are becoming an increasingly used form of technology to replace traditional intersections throughout Pennsylvania. Roundabouts are frequently installed to address intersections with safety issues but may also be installed to improve traffic flow as well as other reasons such as traffic calming, and to facilitate pedestrian mobility.

Roundabouts are recognized by the Pennsylvania State Transportation Innovation Council (STIC) as an innovation that has become standard practice within the transportation community. The Pennsylvania STIC facilitates the rapid implementation of proven, well-researched and documented state, regional, national, and international technologies, tactics, techniques and other innovations that are new to Pennsylvania.

PennDOT recently reviewed data for 36 roundabouts on state routes at intersections that were previously stop or signal controlled. These roundabouts were selected based on having at least three years of crash data available before and after the roundabouts were built. This accounts for a total of 387 before years and 220 after years of data.

Department data from 2002 through 2021 – based on police-submitted crash reports and weighted based on the number of before and after years, but not for increases in traffic volume – shows the following:

- Suspected serious injuries were reduced by 76%;
- Suspected minor injuries were reduced by 22%;
- Possible/unknown severity injuries were reduced by 70%; and
- Total number of crashes decreased by 9%.

Unfortunately, there was one fatality in one of the roundabouts; however, there were a combined three fatalities prior to the installation of roundabouts at the 33 locations.

In addition to the 36 roundabouts meeting the selection criteria, 38 other roundabouts have been built on state routes with 16 more under construction and 15 in final design.

The roundabouts included in the review are at the following intersections:

## Allegheny County

- Route 3070 (Ewing Road) and Business Route 376 Ramp, opened in 2011.

## Beaver County

- Route 68 (Adams Street), Route 1034 (Brighton Avenue) and Route 6018 (Brighton Ave./Rhode Island Ave.), opened in 2011.

## Berks County

- Route 222 and Route 662, opened in 2018.

## Bucks County

- Route 2043 (Trevoise Road) and Somerton Road, opened in 2012; and
- Route 213 (Bridgetown Pk./Maple Ave.) and Route 2010 (Bridgetown Pk.), opened in 2016.



## Butler County

- Route 3024 (Glen Eden Road), Powell Road and Freshcorn Road, opened in 2015; and
- Route 228 and SR 2005 (Saxonburg Blvd.), opened in 2018.

## Chester County

- Route 82 (Doe Run Road) and Unionville Road, opened in 2005;
- Route 52 (Lenape Road, S. Wawaset Road and Lenape Unionville Road, opened in 2014; and
- Route 3062 (Strasburg Road), Romansville Road and Shadyside Road, opened in 2017.

## Crawford County

- Route 6/19 (Main Street) and Route 198 (South Street), opened in 2017; and
- Route 6/19 (Main Street) and Route 198 (Brookhouse Street), opened in 2017.

## Cumberland County

- Route 34 (Spring Road), Route 1007 (Sunnyside Drive) and Mountain Road, opened in 2014; and
- Route 2004 (W. Lisburn Road) and Grantham Road, opened in 2018.

## Dauphin County

- Route 39 (Linglestown Road) and Route 3019 (Mountain Road), opened in 2011;
- Route 322 (Governor Road) and Homestead Lane, opened in 2016; and
- Route 322 (Governor Road) and Meadow Lane, opened in 2016.

## Delaware County

- Route 1023 (N. Newtown Street) and Route 1046 (St. Davids Road), opened in 2008; and
- Route 320 (Chester Road), Rutgers Avenue and Fieldhouse Lane, opened in 2014.

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# SUICIDE PREVENTION AWARENESS MONTH: PENNDOT IS BUILDING A ROAD TO RECOVERY IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

By Melissa Batula, P.E., Acting Executive Deputy Secretary

Safety is central to our mission at PennDOT. Secretary Gramian and I spend a lot of time talking about things like equipment safety and the importance of driving the speed limit through work zones to keep the men and women safe who build and maintain our infrastructure.

In addition to the physical safety of our workforce, their mental health and well-being is also important. Work-related stress can have a severe impact on mental health and, without proper support, can lead to suicide. This is particularly concerning in the construction industry, which has one of the highest suicide rates compared to other industries.

More research is needed to better understand why the rates of suicide in the construction industry are disproportionately higher than other industries. However, we know that work-related stresses such as seasonal work, demanding schedules and workplace injuries certainly contribute.

That is why I recently joined with leaders from multiple Commonwealth agencies and advocates from Prevent Suicide PA to recognize September as Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. Early in the month, we gathered at an event at the Capitol Rotunda in Harrisburg to raise awareness around the work we are collectively doing to embed suicide prevention efforts across systems.

At PennDOT, we interact with the public every day across our transportation network and are well situated to take opportunities to share important information with our

customers, including information about suicide prevention. There are simple things we can do to potentially save a life, such as posting messaging at our welcome centers and on our 511PA travel information app, and even on our roadways.



At the event, I shared a statistic that is truly shocking: The suicide rate in our industry is five times greater than the rate for all fatal work-related injuries.

This should be a wakeup call that we need to take suicide in the construction industry seriously. The more we can do to actively destigmatize and raise awareness about mental health, the better. We also need to look at the culture of the industry, and move past the “tough it out, be a man” banter.

To all of our employees – and all Pennsylvanians laboring in the construction industry – please know that it is okay to not be okay sometimes. You matter and you are not alone. We care about you and appreciate all you do every day.

Video from the September 13 event in Harrisburg is available to view at <https://pacast.com/m?p=22180>.

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## Erie County

- Route 19 (High Street) and Route 97, opened in 2014; and
- Route 5 and Route 4016 (Millfair Road), opened in 2018.

## Luzerne County

- I-81 Exit 178, Airport Road interchange, opened in 2015;
- Route 2008 (Middle Road) and Espy Street, opened in 2017;
- Route 415, Church Street, Lake Street and Main Street, opened in 2018; and
- Route 2008 (Middle Road) and Kosciuszko Street, opened in 2018.

## Mercer County

- Route 718 (Dock Street) and Connelly Blvd., opened in 2018.

## Monroe County

- I-80 Exit 310 and Route 2028 (Broad Street), opened in 2018.

## Montgomery County

- Route 29 (Gravel Pike) and Route 73 (Big Road), opened in 2009.

## Philadelphia County

- Route 4013 (Park Drive) and Route 4015 (Walnut Lane), opened in 2018.

## Washington County

- Route 519 and Brownlee Road, and Route 519 and Thomas Eighty-Four Road, opened in 2015; and
- I-70 Exit 32 and Route 2040 (Wilson Road), opened in 2018.

## York County

- Route 116 (Main Street) and Hanover Street and Roths Church Road, opened in 2007; and
- Route 74 (Delta Road) and Bryansville Road, opened in 2008.

# WALNUT STREET EXTENSION GROUNDBREAKING HIGHLIGHTS PARTNERSHIPS, COOPERATION, AND GOATS

By Dave Thompson, Community Relations Coordinator, District 8



A significant project that broke ground in East Lampeter Township, Lancaster County this July highlighted how partnerships and cooperation foster success.

The project – known as the Walnut Street Extension – will alleviate congestion, improve safety, and support economic development by extending Walnut Street on alignment with a section of PennDOT right-of-way known locally as the Goat Path.

The property on which Goat Path is located was acquired decades ago by the department for a new roadway, but public opposition and funding issues at the time resulted in those plans being shelved. The right-of-way became noted as a place local farmers grazed their livestock – thus the nickname.

Times change, however, and the current project has plenty of support. The groundbreaking ceremony was held just yards from the proposed new roadway alignment. In homage to its nickname, event organizers brought in several goats, none of whom appeared all that impressed with the festivities. They grazed uninterested as dignitaries discussed the impacts the project will have in the region. And the impacts – positive – will be significant.

The project will extend the street 1.2 miles as a two-lane road connecting a mixed-use commercial and residential development to Route 30. It includes a multimodal component by extending the Greater Lancaster Heritage Pathway, a paved bicycle and pedestrian trail just to the east of the new road.

The project is expected to ease congestion on and around nearby Greenfield Road, which runs parallel and adjacent to the proposed roadway. An estimated 500 to 600 vehicles per hour are expected to be diverted from the Greenfield Road corridor during peak hours.

Project sponsor High Real Estate Group LLC (HREG) of Lancaster leveraged \$14.8 million in state transportation funds, plus a \$3 million DCED grant to pay for the nearly \$22 million project.

HREG officials gave kudos to PennDOT and other partners for their support and cooperation, without which the project was unlikely to have gotten off the ground. Of particular note was the support of Acting Deputy Secretary for Administration Mike Keiser, P.E., who was district executive when the new project was proposed. High officials said Mike's support was a key factor in moving the project forward.

"The Walnut Street Extension Project demonstrates the potential when government, the private sector and local residents work together to solve a transportation-safety issue while preserving precious farmland, creating jobs and ensuring recreational opportunities for county residents and visitors," said Mark Fitzgerald, president and COO, High Real Estate Group LLC. "This project makes Lancaster County more vibrant and more livable through smart growth within a modern, multimodal transportation system. I want to thank all the stakeholders, in particular East Lampeter Township and PennDOT, for all their hard work over a three-year period to make this project happen."

"PennDOT understands that community support and collaboration equal success when it comes to transportation projects. This long-awaited improvement will ease congestion, promote economic growth, and improve multimodal connectivity in the region," said Mike Keiser. "PennDOT is proud to be a partner in advancing this worthy project."

## MEET DISTRICT 8'S KEVIN KEEFE

By Dave Thompson, Community Relations Coordinator, District 8

District 8 Assistant District Executive for Construction Kevin Keefe has been with PennDOT for over 30 years. He began his career as a civil engineer trainee (CET) in 1992 and knew very early on what he wanted to do.



"I love construction," he said. "My entire career has been in construction, and I've loved every minute of it."

The road to Kevin's career started well before he was hired by PennDOT. Kevin had an aptitude for math and physics, and physics teacher at Wyalusing Valley Jr. Sr. High School in Bradford County – Mr. Jenkins – influenced him to pursue a career as an engineer.

Other mentors along the way included Pat Gardner who Kevin worked for early on in his career at Central Office's Quality Assurance Support Division before moving to the QA East Division.

Following a stint at District 5 serving in the QA unit, he came to District 8 as assistant structure control engineer, serving under Structure Control Engineer Naji Chidiac, another major influence. Although Kevin had his eye on assistant construction engineer (ACE), he didn't have any supervisory experience, so he went back to QA in District 8 to serve as a team leader to get that experience.

He served at that position for year during which the ARRA stimulus funding allowed the district to move forward with more construction projects. That created a need for an additional

temporary ACE position for the season, so Kevin took over projects for Cumberland County and the northern section of York County, all the while serving as QA team leader.

Eventually, things began to open up for him. A freeze on manager salaries resulted in the Structure Control Engineer and three ACE's leaving the department. And while Kevin, who had in the meantime gotten his PE license, still coveted an ACE position, he settled for Structure Control Engineer.

"It turned out to be one of the best jobs I had with the department," he said.

After serving as SCE for five years, he served as Construction Services Engineer for five years before being appointed ADE for Construction in November of 2019.

He said at one point about 15 years ago, he contemplated changing careers and becoming a math or physics teacher – but that moment passed and he's glad it did.

"At the end of the day, I love my job and I enjoy going to work," Kevin said. "I've got a great staff that makes me look good – and that's half the battle."

A widower, Kevin currently resides in the Duncannon area. He has four sons: Travis, the oldest, graduated from Mansfield University and works as a software engineer, Kaleb, 21, attends Susquehanna University studying business finance, Zach, 18, is a senior in high school who plans major in digital forensic computer science. His youngest, Ryan, 16 is a high school junior who wants to be an engineer.

## PENNDOT OFFERS DRIVERS FACING SUSPENSION SECOND CHANCE

By Craig Yetter, Community Relations Coordinator, Driver and Vehicle Services

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) announced that select drivers facing a suspension due to accumulation of points on their driving records or for a conviction of excessive speeding now have a chance at redemption through successfully completing the newly-instituted Driver Improvement School (DIS).

As drivers are convicted of certain moving violations, points are assigned to their driving record. Once a driver's record has been reduced below six points and for the second time, shows as many as six points or has a conviction for excessive speeding, that driver is required to attend a departmental hearing. At the departmental hearing, a driver meets with a Driver Safety Examiner (DSE) to review their driving record and discuss the driving habits that resulted in the hearing. At the conclusion of the hearing, a determination will be made whether serving a 15-day suspension or attending PennDOT's DIS would be most beneficial for the driver to assist in making better decisions while behind the wheel.

An individual who attends and successfully completes the DIS due to their record showing for the second time as many as six points, will have two points removed from their record and avoid a 15-day suspension. An individual who attends and successfully completes the DIS due to a conviction on excessive speeding will



avoid having to serve a 15-day suspension. If an individual does not successfully complete the course or fails to attend, they will be required to serve a 60-day driver's license suspension.

The DIS curriculum focuses on safety and addresses poor driver behaviors and judgment exhibited in "high risk" drivers. This six-hour course focuses on educating and assisting problematic drivers to identify why they engage in risky driving behavior and how to utilize strategies for behavior modification to assist in improving their driving habits to prevent future violations and crashes.

For more information, visit the Driver Improvement School page on the Driver and Vehicle Services website.

# PENNDOT PHASES IN NEWLY-DESIGNED DRIVER LICENSES, IDENTIFICATION CARDS

By Craig Yetter, Community Relations Coordinator, Driver and Vehicle Services

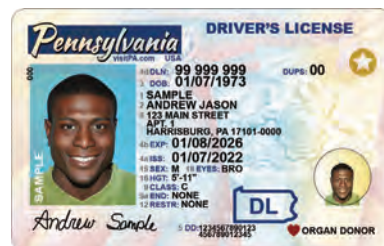
PennDOT is updating the design and enhancing the security features of its driver license and identification card products. Piloting the new products began at the Summerdale Driver License Center in Enola in September and all Driver and Photo centers will transition to the new products by mid-November 2022. The new products will be phased in over the next four-year renewal cycle and will replace existing products. The new products will be phased in during renewal cycles and will replace existing products. Both current and new card designs will be in circulation during the transition period.

Both standard and REAL ID compliant products will use the new design and security features. REAL ID is optional in Pennsylvania, and customers are able to opt into REAL ID. Beginning May 3, 2023, Pennsylvanians will need a REAL ID-compliant driver's license, photo ID card, or another form of federally acceptable identification (such as a valid passport or military ID) to board a domestic commercial flight or enter a federal building or military installation that requires ID. More information about REAL ID can be on the REAL ID page on the Driver and Vehicle Services website.

The cards look different and have additional enhanced security features that improve fraud prevention and protect from counterfeiting and alteration.

Some of the enhanced features include:

- Guilloche Security Design, a feature that includes sophisticated techniques to embed a variety of customized security patterning into the credential, using non-commercial software developed specifically for high security documents (banknotes, passports, ID cards, etc);



- Optically Variable Ghost Portrait and Variable Data with UV, features that change their appearance when the viewing angle of the card changes, which moves them from fully visible to non-visible. The card also includes an ultraviolet (UV) response that fluoresces under UV lighting. The UV response is fixed – visible under UV light regardless of viewing angle;
- Dynamic Look Through Element (DLTE), a dynamic feature with gold metallic tint that is visible under direct lighting.

The new cards comply with American Association of Motor Vehicle Association (AAMVA) 2020 specifications.

Customers may obtain a variety of driver and vehicle products and services, including all forms, publications and driver training manuals, online through on the Driver and Vehicle Services website.

Driver and vehicle online services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week and include driver's license, photo ID and vehicle registration renewals; driver-history services; changes of address; driver license and vehicle registration restoration letters; ability to pay driver license or vehicle insurance restoration fee; driver license and photo ID duplicates; and driver exam scheduling. There are no additional fees for using online services.

## STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION ADOPTS UPDATED 12-YEAR TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM

Pennsylvania's State Transportation Commission (STC) today updated the 12-Year Program. The new plan anticipates \$84 billion will be available over the next 12 years for improvements to roads, bridges, transit systems, airports and railroads.

The 12-Year Program, or TYP, is a multimodal, fiscally constrained planning tool used to identify and prioritize Pennsylvania's transportation projects and the funds needed to complete them. State law requires the STC to review and update the TYP every two years. No capital project can move forward unless it is included in the TYP.

The newly adopted program, which takes effect October 1, incorporates funding from the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), and anticipates the following funding availability in the first four years of the TYP from federal, state and local sources:

- \$16 billion for state highway and bridge projects;
- \$11.4 billion for public transit;
- \$331 million for multimodal projects;
- \$232 million for rail freight; and
- \$168 million for aviation.

The TYP also highlights some of PennDOT's major accomplishments over the past two years, ranging from the modernization of train stations to the implementation of innovative strategies and the latest technologies to enhance safety and efficiency across a wide range of operations.

Four Rural Planning Organizations, 19 Metropolitan Planning Organizations and one independent county partnered with PennDOT in the review and development of the update. Now that the STC has approved the update, it has been submitted to the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration for review and approval. The Federal Highway Administration coordinates with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to review the plan's conformity with air quality requirements.

Public input early in the 12-Year planning process played a key role in identifying investments in the various transportation modes.

The State Transportation Commission is chaired by the Secretary of PennDOT and consists of 10 appointed citizens as well as the majority and minority chairs of the state House and Senate Transportation committees.

# WOLF ADMINISTRATION HOSTS ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION WITH TEENS ON SAFE DRIVING



During a face-to-face forum at Red Land High School in Lewisberry today, representatives from the Pennsylvania departments of Transportation (PennDOT) and Education and Pennsylvania State Police, as well as local education and law enforcement representatives shared their collective driver safety knowledge with students from Red Land and Cedar Cliff high schools.

The forum was held to call attention to teen driver safety and share important information directly with teen drivers during the nationwide observance of Teen Driver Safety Week October 16-22, and gave students an opportunity to directly ask questions of the panel.

From 2017 to 2021, there were 81,364 crashes involving at least one 16- to 19-year-old driver in Pennsylvania, resulting in 480 fatalities. 66 percent of those crashes involved a teen driver driving too fast for conditions (25,721 crashes), driver inexperience (8,707), driver distraction (12,411) or improper/careless turning (13,092). There was a total of 53,673 crashes with one or more of these factors.

The risk of a crash involving any of these factors can be reduced through practice, limiting the number of passengers riding with a new driver, obeying all rules of the road, and using common sense.

PennDOT suggests that parents consider the following recommendations to help their children become safe and responsible drivers:

- Set a good example with your own driving habits.
- Have regular conversations with your teen about safe driving skills before they get their learner's permit.

- Establish a parent/teen driving contract.
- Ride with your teen occasionally after they receive their license to monitor driving skills.
- Enforce observance of speed limits and other rules of the road.
- Strongly encourage your teen to avoid distractions behind the wheel, such as talking or texting on their cell phone.
- Limit the number of passengers they have in their vehicle. State law prohibits 16- and 17-year-olds with a junior license from driving with more than one unrelated passenger under the age of 18 years old for the first six months. After the first six months, a junior driver shall not drive a vehicle with more than three unrelated passengers under 18 years old.
- Limit dawn, dusk, and nighttime driving until your teen gains more experience and enforce a curfew. Remember, state law prohibits 16- and 17-year-olds with a junior license from driving between 11:00 PM and 5:00 AM.
- Gradually increase the amount of time/distance your teen is permitted to drive.

As part of ongoing efforts to educate and assist teen drivers, PennDOT invites teens, their parents, teachers, and others to share video messages on Instagram about the personal costs of a crash, close calls, and advice on avoiding crashes. Anyone can join in this important conversation by using the hashtag #PATeenDriver.

# STUDENTS HONORED AT PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOL BUS SAFETY POSTER CONTEST AWARDS CEREMONY



PennDOT Director of the Bureau of Driver Licensing Kara Templeton joined the Pennsylvania State Police and school bus safety advocates to honor nine students for communicating important school bus safety messages through their submissions to this year's School Bus Safety Poster Contest.

The students, in kindergarten through eighth grade, were recognized for their winning entries in the 2022 School Bus Safety Poster Contest. The theme for this year's contest – "1 Bus + 1 Driver = A Big Impact on Education" – reminds everyone of the important dynamic between students and their school bus drivers, who navigate commonwealth roadways daily to deliver students to school and home without incident.

This year's winners were chosen from over 400 student entries from schools across Pennsylvania. The first-place entries will be moved on to the national competition, which will be judged at the end of this month.

2022 School Bus Safety Poster Contest Winners include:

## Kindergarten – Grade 2

1st Place: Lipi Kairi, Mt. Lebanon Montessori School, Pittsburgh, Allegheny County

2nd Place: Ananya Sri Boddupalli, Franklin Elementary School, Sewickley, Allegheny County

3rd Place: Luke Dye, Mars Area Primary Center, Mars, Butler County

## Grades 3-5

1st Place: Kashish Bhargava, Shamona Creek Elementary School, Downingtown, Chester County

2nd Place: Avery Herlocher, Sugar Valley Rural Charter School, Loganton, Clinton County

3rd Place: Abbey Hines, All Saints Catholic School, Cresson, Cambria County

## Grades 6-8

1st Place: Razayah Keller, Brockway Area Jr/Sr High School, Brockway, Jefferson County

2nd Place: Peyton Seaman, East Juniata High School, McAlisterville, Juniata County

3rd Place: Kaelyn Walter, East Juniata High School, McAlisterville, Juniata County

There were no qualifying entries submitted this year for the Special Education and Computer Aided categories.

Templeton and Sgt. Michael Pavelko, Division Supervisor for the Commercial Vehicle Safety Division of the Bureau of Patrol for the Pennsylvania State Police, presented certificates and small gifts provided by the Pennsylvania School Bus Association to the students in recognition of their efforts to help to communicate this important safety message.

Historically, the ceremonies are also used to recognize the winners of the statewide and international school bus driver competitions, however, neither competition was held this year. These two events have held special significance in the celebration of this important safety observance, but their absence does not diminish the important message of protecting students from potential harm as they commute daily to and from school.

For more information about school bus safety, visit PennDOT's School Bus Safety Tips page on the Driver Vehicles Services website. The website also offers an interactive video illustrating Pennsylvania's school bus stopping law.