

## What is a Planning and Environmental Linkage (PEL) Study?



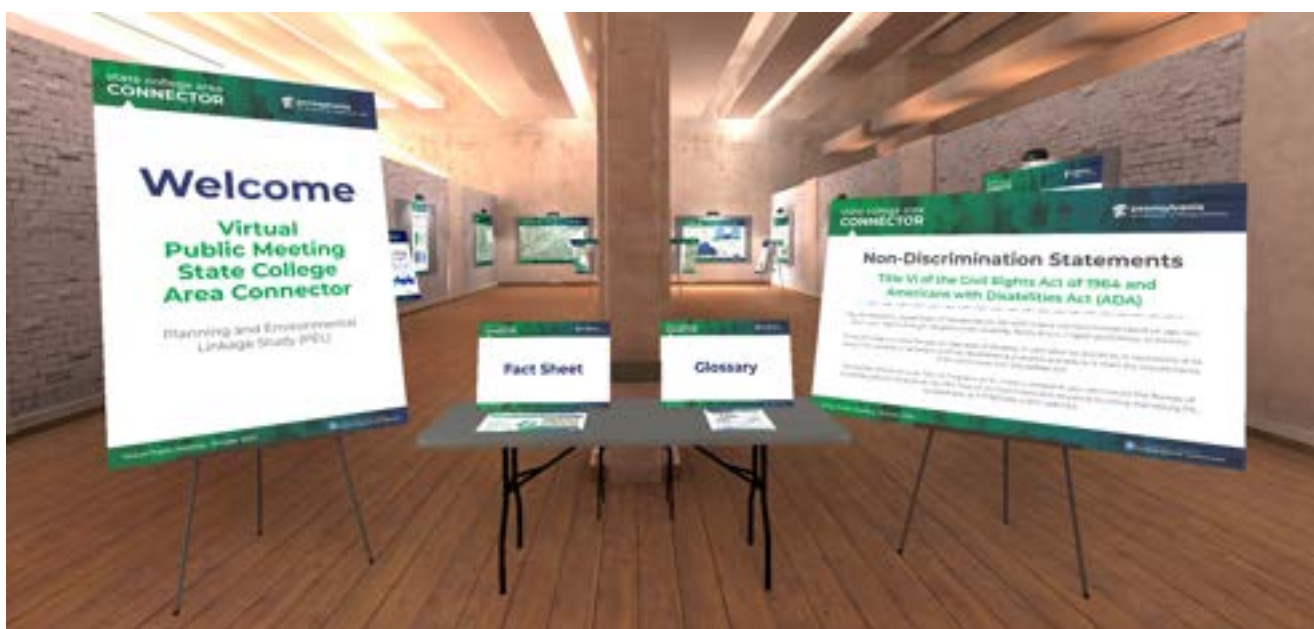
The PEL Study process is a high-level, early-planning approach to transportation decision making that considers environmental, community, and economic goals, resulting in projects that can be carried through design and construction. Public and agency involvement is conducted

throughout this phase. Overall, the PEL Study helps inform planning decisions, streamline the project delivery process, and can serve as a public platform to discuss and prioritize transportation issues.

## 2020 Virtual Public Meeting

A State College Area Connector (SCAC) Study virtual public meeting was held virtually October 28, 2020 through November 4, 2020. The meeting provided an overview of the transportation development process, the SCAC PEL process, environmental resource mapping, engineering and traffic data, and the draft SCAC Study transportation purpose and needs. A summary of the meeting and the virtual public meeting materials are available for review at [www.PennDOT.gov/SCAC](http://www.PennDOT.gov/SCAC).

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SCAC Study 2020 Virtual Public Meeting Room

## SCAC Purpose and Need

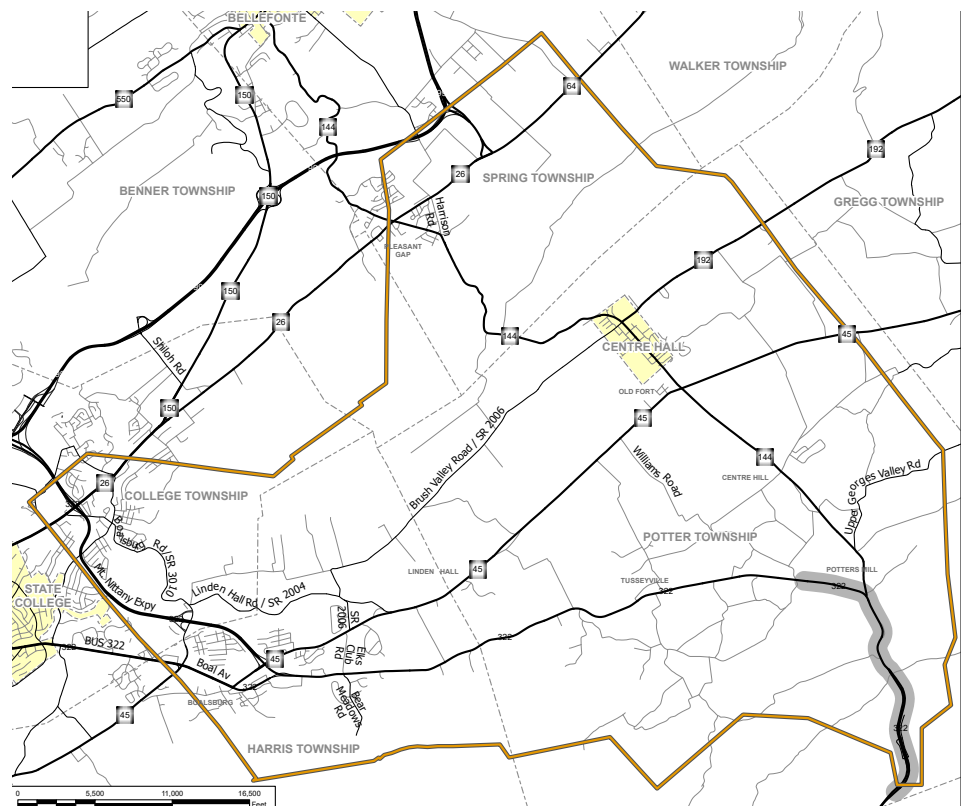
To start the SCAC PEL Study, investigations were completed to identify the need, or transportation deficiencies/problems in the 70 square mile study area. These needs resulted in the development of the study purpose, or a set of objectives that will be met to address the identified transportation problems. **Below are summaries of the purpose and needs:**

- ▶ High peak hour traffic volumes cause congestion and result in unacceptable levels of service on US 322, PA 45, and PA 144 roadways and intersections within the study area.
- ▶ Existing roadway configurations and traffic conditions contribute to safety concerns in the study area.
- ▶ The roadway network and configuration in the study area lacks continuity and does not meet driver expectations.

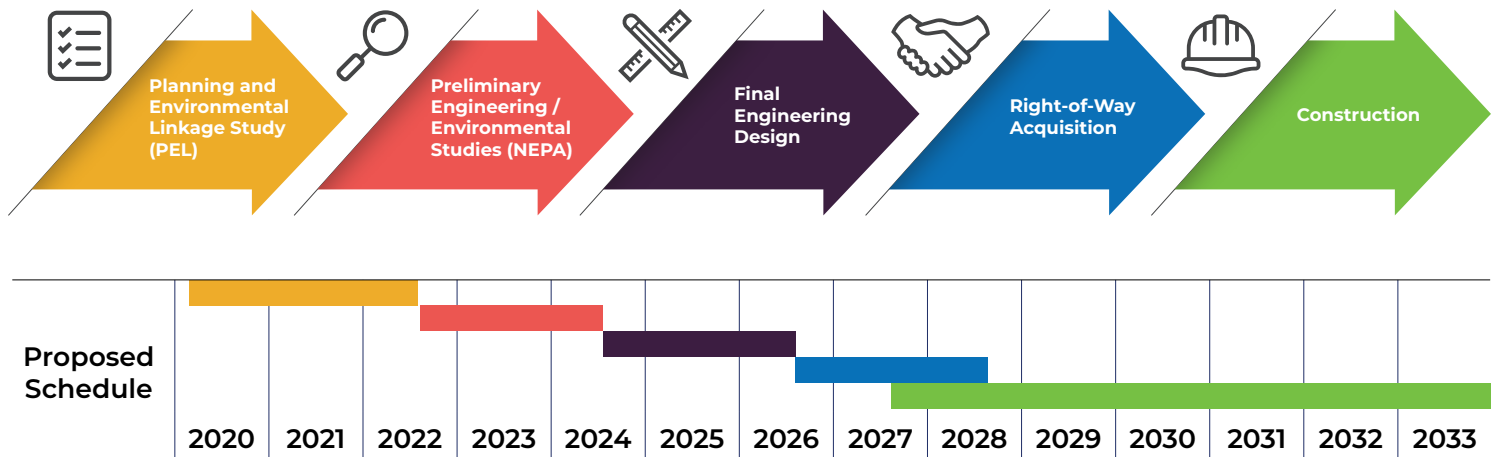
**The SCAC Study purpose is to develop and evaluate a range of alternatives to:**

- ▶ Improve mobility.
- ▶ Meet interstate and regional through traffic and local needs by reducing congestion, addressing safety, and improving system continuity within the study area while accommodating other modes of traffic (bike, pedestrian, horse and buggies, farm equipment traffic, and public transit) where appropriate.
- ▶ Support regional land use visions and goals.

The study purpose and need will be used to identify a reasonable range of alternatives and provide a foundation for measuring the alternatives effectiveness at addressing the area transportation problems. The Final Purpose and Need Report can be found on the study website ([PennDOT.gov/SCAC](http://PennDOT.gov/SCAC)).



## What is the Process for Advancing Transportation Projects and the Proposed Schedule?



**Planning and Environmental Linkage Study** – A PEL Study is a high-level, early-planning process used for transportation decision making that considers environmental, community, and economic goals early in the planning stage, resulting in projects that can be carried through design and construction. Public and agency involvement is conducted throughout this phase. Overall, the PEL Study helps to inform planning decisions, streamline the project delivery process, and can serve as a public platform to discuss and prioritize transportation issues.



**Preliminary Engineering/Environmental Studies (NEPA)** – Preliminary engineering includes focused studies about traffic, safety, the environment, and the development of project specific alternatives. The information allows Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and PennDOT to make decisions about necessary transportation network improvements. Assessments also determine the benefits and impacts the alternatives would have on natural, cultural, and socio-economic environments. Public and agency involvement is conducted through this phase. The preliminary engineering/environmental studies phase ends with the selection of an alternative to advance into final design. Approval from FHWA must be received to advance into final engineering design.



**Final Engineering Design** – During final engineering design, the selected project alternative design plans are refined to identify right-of-way requirements and are detailed enough to construct the project. Fulfill commitments made during the NEPA phase to mitigate proposed environmental impacts. Environmental permitting and detailed utility coordination occur during this phase.





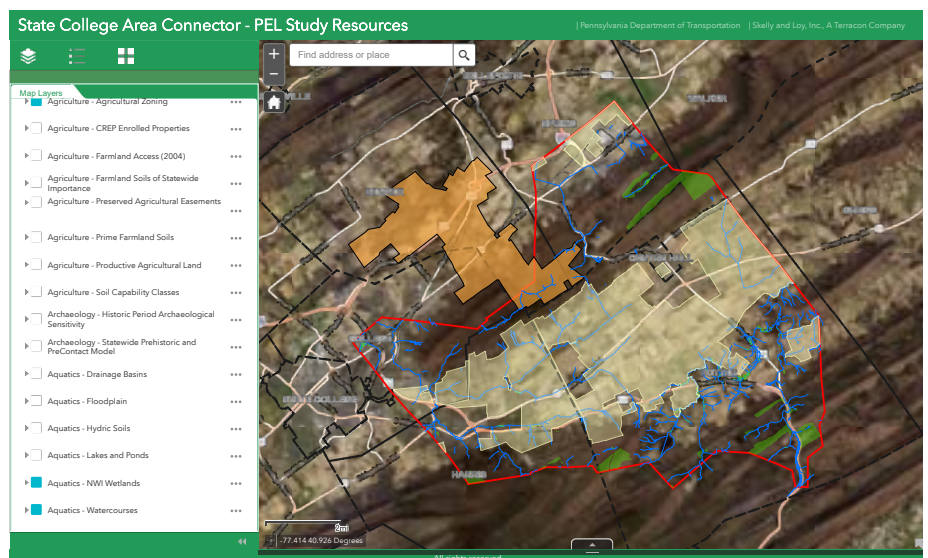
**Right-of-Way Acquisition** – When project impacts to private property, including homes and businesses, are unavoidable, PennDOT will work with the owners to determine the property’s Fair Market Value and negotiate the acquisition of the property. When the acquisition of property results in the need for a property owner to relocate, PennDOT provides relocation assistance to those whose property is acquired (see the FAQ page on the study website for information on right-of-way acquisition).



**Construction** – Once final engineering design is complete and the right-of-way has been acquired, PennDOT will solicit bids and award construction contracts. Depending on the scale of the proposed improvements, multiple construction contracts may be developed to complete the overall project. Often, the first contracts awarded are smaller “early action” contracts that involve improvements that will help better accommodate traffic during subsequent construction projects. Staging of the subsequent contracts will also be developed to safely convey traffic through the work zone and minimize travel time delays through and around the project area. The newly constructed improvements to the transportation system will address the purpose and needs which were identified in the early stages of the process.

## Online Environmental Data Mapping Tool

Environmental data were collected from various sources and limited field visits throughout the study area. The data will provide a foundation for developing future alternatives that would minimize impacts to natural, cultural, agricultural, social, and community resources while meeting the purpose and need for the project. The environmental data was compiled using a Geographic Information System (GIS) to manage the information. It is anticipated that this information will be updated as needed based on public feedback and field surveys to be conducted as part of future detailed studies. The use of GIS facilitates the environmental impact analyses and the generation of maps for the study. The use of GIS also enables the development of a Web Map. The Web Map is a web-based mapping application that allows that spatially displays the various environmental data sets collected for the PEL study area, along with narrative text for specific resource features. To view this data, visit the study website at [PennDOT.gov/SCAC](http://PennDOT.gov/SCAC).



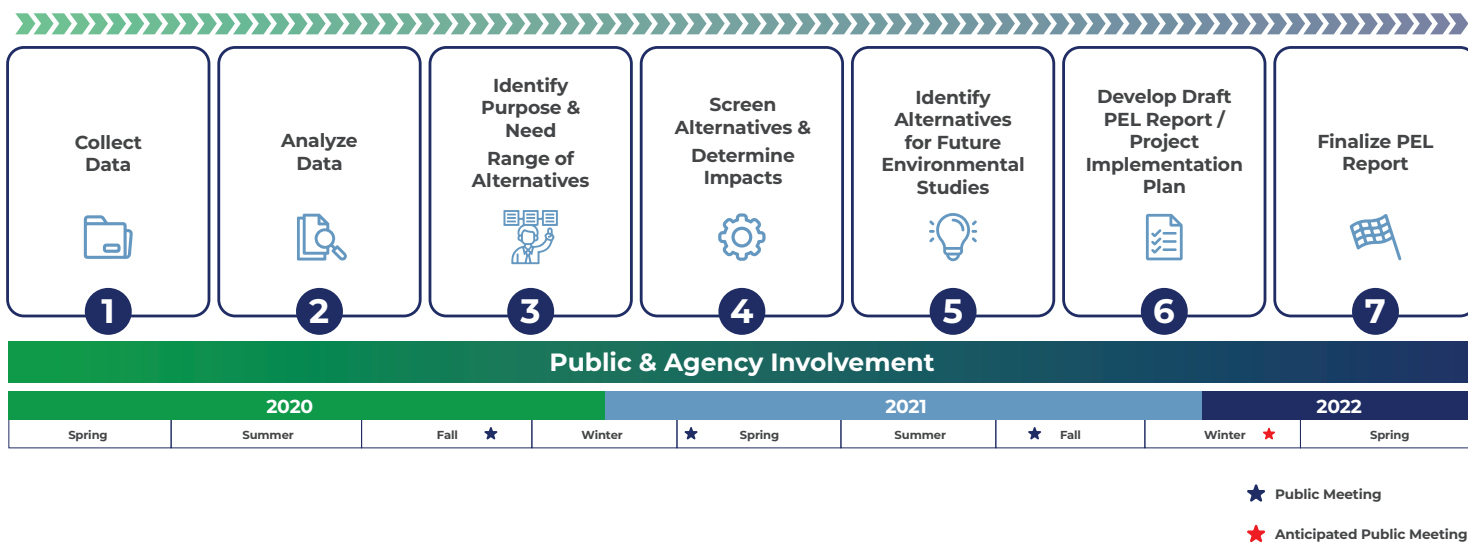


## What is the SCAC PEL Study Process?

There are seven steps to complete the SCAC PEL Study.

- ▶ **Step 1** collects environmental, engineering, and traffic data to provide a foundation for use in future steps.
- ▶ **Step 2** analyzes the collected data to identify the challenges on the existing transportation system.
- ▶ **Step 3** documents transportation challenges by developing purpose and need statements that will be used to identify a range of alternatives to be further evaluated.
- ▶ **Step 4** analyzes the alternatives to determine the benefits they provide to the transportation system and their associated impacts.
- ▶ **Step 5** identifies alternatives to advance for evaluation in future environmental and engineering studies.
- ▶ **Step 6** documents the results of the PEL study and develops an implementation plan for future studies or specific projects.
- ▶ **Step 7** finalizes the PEL and receives study approval from the Federal Highway Administration.

The SCAC PEL Study is currently in Step 5 where the range of alternatives have been refined and specific alternative options are being screened to determine the benefits the various options have on the transportation network along with their potential environmental impacts. A public meeting occurring September 22 and 23 will offer opportunities for the public to review the range of alternatives considered in the PEL Study along with the specific alternative options considered and the preliminary results of the alternative screening process.



## Updates on Current Construction Projects in District 2

### I-80 Centre County:

A 3-phase project is underway to build local access, a high-speed interchange connection between I-99 and I-80, and to make improvements on Jacksonville Road (Route 26). Completion of all three phases will support regional freight economy and improve the reliability of roadway travel throughout the region.

The I-80 Local Access Interchange (I-80/A18) will provide direct access between SR 26 and I-80 at a standard diamond interchange and will only be utilized by local traffic destined to SR 26. This project is under construction.

The Jacksonville Road Betterment (26/147) will reconstruct and widen SR 26 to maintain and support the State roadway network. It will feature 11-foot travel lanes and 4-foot shoulders. Cost estimate is \$4 - 6 million. Scheduled to bid October 20, 2022.

The I-80 High Speed Interchange (I-80/B18) will provide a direct connection between I-99 and I-80 via high speed ramps, eliminating the need to travel along SR 26 to access either highway. The stop-controlled intersections will be eliminated with the project and realigned to service local traffic. Cost estimate is \$175 million. Scheduled to bid February 16, 2023.

### Route 322 / Potters Mills Gap

A 3-Phase project on Route 322 near Potters Mills in Centre County dates back to 2015. Phase One of the project constructed the new bridge at Sand Mountain Road. Phase Two created the new local interchange on Route 322 at Sand Mountain Road. Phase Three reconstructed Route 322 from Sand Mountain Road to Potters Mills – including a new Route 322/Route 144 intersection. The new, 4-lane alignment for Route 322 opened to traffic in the fall of 2020 and was celebrated at a ribbon-cutting on November 9, 2020. Work in 2021 has focused on completion of improvements on old Route 322/new State Route 2015.

Learn more about District 2 at [www.PennDOT.gov/District2](http://www.PennDOT.gov/District2)

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

The next SCAC PEL Study public meeting will be held September 22 and 23, 2021 from 1:00 PM to 8:00 PM.

The purpose of this meeting is to introduce the PEL Study process, present the range of alternatives, discuss the screening process and preliminary results, and solicit public comments.

### WHERE:

Wyndham Garden  
State College

Mountain View Ballroom

310 Elks Club Road  
Boalsburg, PA

## For more information contact:

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