FINDING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR TRANSPORTATION FUNDING
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Pennsylvania’s gas tax is becoming an unreliable source for funding Pennsylvania’s vast transportation network. To make possible phasing it out and to further address the state’s transportation funding needs, Governor Wolf signed an Executive Order establishing the Transportation Revenue Options Commission, which will develop comprehensive funding recommendations for Pennsylvania’s large and aging infrastructure.

In 2019, the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) identified major risks to transportation funding such as reduced fuel revenues, unpredictable federal funding, and legislative changes to reduce commitments.

PennDOT’s latest assessment places the annual gap of its needs in all modes and facilities at $9.3 billion, growing to an annual $14.5 billion gap by 2030.

Further, as more fuel-efficient cars and technologies are created, reliance on the gas tax for state revenue is less and less dependable. Any phase out of the gas tax will need to be coupled with new or replacement revenue.

The Transportation Revenue Options Commission is comprised of transportation, economic, and community stakeholders from both the public and private sectors, including majority and minority leaders from the House and Senate Transportation and Appropriations committees. PennDOT Secretary Yassmin Gramian will serve as commission chair.

A complete list of individuals invited to join the commission can be found at: www.penndot.gov/about-us/funding/Pages/TROC.aspx.

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 Press Office at DOTcomm@pa.gov.

We hope you enjoy this latest issue!
PENNDOT IS DOING ITS PART TO COMMIT TO A LITTER-FREE PENNSYLVANIA

By PennDOT Secretary Yassmin Gramian, P.E.

Spring is here - but our closets and drawers aren’t the only things that can use a little cleaning. As Pennsylvanians venture outdoors to enjoy the warmth and sun of the season while hiking, boating, enjoying sports, or sightseeing, we’re reminded that our sidewalks, roads, highways, and parks also need our attention.

Home to bountiful natural resources, beautiful landscapes and stunning countryside, Pennsylvania is a beautiful state – but also one with a litter problem. That one piece of trash tossed out a window by a careless traveler becomes an unsightly mess cluttering our scenic roadsides. Whether it’s cigarette butts, plastic food packaging, or bottles tossed to the ground after an outing, overflowing trash cans, improperly secured truckloads, or heaps of illegally dumped tires – littering is happening in every rural, suburban, and urban area of the Commonwealth.

I want to remind all Pennsylvanians that we share an important responsibility to keep our communities clean and beautiful for current and future generations to enjoy. PennDOT spends upward of $14 million cleaning up roadside litter every year. It costs approximately $600 per ton to clean up an illegal dumpsite and it is estimated that there are thousands of illegal dumpsites across Pennsylvania. And, our work doesn’t stop there.

In June 2018, Pennsylvania established Act 62, which designated certain segments of our roads as Litter Enforcement Corridors – a tool to help the state crack down on litter and dumping. These road segments generally have a high aesthetic or historic value that are worth preserving and are marked with signs to notify motorists.

This year, PennDOT hosted anti-litter media events in conjunction with The Pennsylvania State Police and Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful to highlight these Litter Enforcement Corridors.

Litter is a problem for us all – but let’s all work together to keep our communities clean and free of litter.

For more information please visit our website: www.PennDOT.gov. Or find us on social media at:

www.facebook.com/PennsylvaniaDepartmentofTransportation
www.facebook.com/penndotsec/
www.twitter.com/PennDOTnews
www.instagram.com/pennsylvaniadot
www.linkedin.com/company/penndot
As part of its study to explore sustainable transportation funding methods and completing critical projects, PennDOT announced the bridges being considered for its PennDOT Pathways Major Bridge Public-Private Partnership (P3) Initiative, and the coming industry opportunities to participate.

To support PennDOT Pathways, an alternative funding Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study is underway to identify near- and long-term funding solutions for the overall transportation system and establish a methodology for their evaluation. One of the early findings of the PEL study is that tolling of major bridges in need of replacement or rehabilitation appears to be a viable near-term solution. To advance this funding alternative, PennDOT is pursuing the first initiative of the PennDOT Pathways Program: The Major Bridge P3 Initiative.

The Pennsylvania P3 Board approved the Major Bridge P3 Initiative on November 12, 2020, which allows PennDOT to use the P3 delivery model for major bridges in need of rehabilitation or replacement, and to consider alternative funding methods for these locations. Through the P3 model, PennDOT can leverage private investment to rebuild critical bridges during a period with historically low interest rates and a favorable labor market. This initiative can provide a dedicated source of revenue for these infrastructure improvements and could create significant savings over the life of the program while ensuring the vitality of the state’s transportation system and economy.

The bridges being considered for tolling through the Major Bridge P3 Initiative are structures of substantial size that warrant timely attention and would require significant funds to rehabilitate or replace. Additionally, these bridges were selected based on the feasibility of construction beginning in two to four years to maximize near-term benefits, and with the intention that their locations are geographically balanced to avoid impact to just one region. Projects being considered, and for which a public involvement process begins this spring, include:

- I-78 Lenhartsville Bridge Replacement Project (Berks County);
- I-79 Widening, Bridges and Bridgeville Interchange Reconfiguration (Allegheny County);
- I-80 Canoe Creek Bridges (Clarion County);
- I-80 Nescpeck Creek Bridges (Luzerne County);
- I-80 North Fork Bridges Project (Jefferson County);
- I-80 Over Lehigh River Bridge Project (Luzerne and Carbon counties);
- I-81 Susquehanna Project (Susquehanna County);
- I-83 South Bridge Project (Dauphin County); and
- I-95 Girard Point Bridge Improvement Project (Philadelphia County).

Each bridge’s project scope, surrounding roadway network, and traffic flow is being evaluated for inclusion in one or more project bundles to be advertised this spring. PennDOT is analyzing potential structures for project bundles to ensure fair, competitive, and local participation in the P3 procurement to replace these bridges. Private-sector partners can find a presentation outlining the anticipated process and project

Continued on page 4
As Pennsylvania's mobility needs have grown, the amount of funding required to support our highway and bridge network has continued to increase. PennDOT’s current highway and bridge budget for construction and maintenance is about $6.9 billion per year – less than half of the $15 billion needed to keep Pennsylvania’s highways and bridges in a state of good repair and address major bottlenecks on our roadway network.

These are the latest in the agency’s efforts to support and grow the state’s transportation network in the face of growing needs and shrinking resources. Much of PennDOT’s current highway and bridge funding comes from gas taxes, which are declining due to alternative fuels and fuel efficiency. PennDOT Pathways aims to identify reliable, future-focused funding solutions that will meet the overall transportation system’s growing needs while serving communities. The PennDOT Pathways PEL study will evaluate additional alternative funding solutions and will be available for public comment in the spring.

Over the next year, PennDOT will evaluate these candidate bridges through individual environmental documents being prepared or re-evaluated for each bridge. More information on each individual bridge project, and when the public will have an opportunity to engage on those projects, can be found at www.penndot.gov/funding and on the project pages.

Benefits on the Major Bridge P3 project page
https://tinyurl.com/y3p8ubjs.

Bridge tolling provides funds to reconstruct or replace these costly bridges without depleting PennDOT’s ability to deliver its current program of projects, thus allowing existing funding to continue to be used for needed roadway and bridge safety and operational improvements. Tolling would be all electronic and collected by using E-ZPass or license plate billing. The funds received from the toll would go back to the bridge where the toll is collected to pay for the construction, maintenance, and operation of that bridge.

Over the next year, PennDOT will evaluate these candidate bridges through individual environmental documents being prepared or re-evaluated for each bridge. More information on each individual bridge project, and when the public will have an opportunity to engage on those projects, can be found at www.penndot.gov/funding and on the project pages.
The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation reached a major milestone in its work to issue REAL ID-compliant products to customers before the October 1, 2021, federal compliance deadline by issuing its one millionth REAL ID product in December 2020.

Based on data from other states with optional REAL ID programs, PennDOT anticipates that 2.5 million Pennsylvanians will choose to get a REAL ID-compliant driver’s license or ID card, with 1.3 million obtaining them by May 3, 2023. Now that the million-product threshold has been crossed, PennDOT is positioned well to reach this target by the federal enforcement deadline, with more than 1.2 million issued by early June.

REAL ID is a federal law that affects how states issue driver’s licenses and ID cards if they are going to be acceptable for federal purposes, such as boarding a domestic flight or entering a federal building that requires ID upon entry. A federally acceptable form of identification (whether it’s a Pennsylvania REAL ID driver’s license or ID card, a valid U.S. Passport/Passport Card, a military ID, etc.) must be used for these purposes on and after May 3, 2023. There is no requirement that any resident obtain a REAL ID; PennDOT continues to offer standard-issue driver’s licenses and photo IDs.

PennDOT paused REAL ID issuance in March 2020 due to COVID-19, out of an abundance of caution and in the interest of public health. Additionally, the federal Department of Homeland Security postponed the enforcement date for REAL ID from October 1, 2020, to October 1, 2021, in response to COVID-19 and the national emergency declaration. PennDOT resumed issuing REAL IDs in September 2020.

Customers can obtain a REAL ID by presenting documents for verification and processing at any driver license center. Federal regulations require that to be issued a REAL ID-compliant product, PennDOT must verify the below documents:

**Proof of Identity:** Examples include original or certified copy of a birth certificate filed with the State Office of Vital Records/Statistics with a raised seal/embossed or valid, unexpired, U.S. Passport;

**Proof of Social Security Number:** Social security card, in current legal name;

**Two Proofs of Current, Physical PA Address:** Examples include a current, unexpired PA driver’s license or identification card, vehicle registration or a utility bill with the same name and address; and

**Proof of all Legal Name Changes (if current legal name is different than what is reflected on proof of identity document):** Examples include a certified marriage certificate(s) issued by the County Court for each marriage, court order(s) approving a change in legal name or amended birth certificate issued by the State Office of Vital Records/Statistics. If current name is the same as what is reflected on proof of identity document (usually birth certificate or passport), a customer does not need to show proof of legal name changes.

Customers have three options for obtaining a REAL ID product:

- Customers may order their REAL ID online if they have been pre-verified and their REAL ID product will be mailed to them within 15 business days;
- they can visit any PennDOT driver license center that is open for driver license services, have their documents verified and imaged, and their REAL ID product will be mailed to them within 15 business days;
- or they can visit one of 13 REAL ID Centers and receive their REAL ID product over the counter at the time of service.

When a customer gets their first REAL ID product, they will pay a one-time fee of $30, plus a renewal fee (current renewal fee is $30.50 for a four-year non-commercial driver’s license and $31.50 for a photo ID). The expiration date of their initial REAL ID product
will include any time remaining on their existing non-REAL ID product, plus an additional four years, unless the customer is over 65 and has a two-year license. This expiration date structure means that the customer won’t “lose” time that they’ve already paid for. After the initial REAL ID product expires, the customer will pay no additional fee, beyond regular renewal fees, to renew a REAL ID product.

REAL ID-compliant products are marked with a gold star in the upper right corner; standard-issue (non-compliant) products include the phrase “NOT FOR REAL ID PURPOSES,” per federal regulations. Sample images can be viewed on PennDOT’s website.

More information about REAL ID in Pennsylvania, including frequently asked questions and information on documents required for REAL ID, can be found at www.penndot.gov/REALID.

New Law Provides Free IDs for Pennsylvanians Experiencing Homelessness

As a result of Act 131 of 2020, which Governor Tom Wolf signed into law in late 2020, Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS) said that Pennsylvanians experiencing homelessness will be able to obtain a free initial photo ID.

To obtain an ID at no cost, individuals experiencing homelessness must apply in person at a PennDOT Driver License Center and must meet identification and other requirements. The applicant must inform the Driver License Center counter staff they are applying for or renewing their existing Pennsylvania photo ID and are requesting a free ID due to their homeless status. The individual is required to certify on the application that they are homeless as defined in Section 103 of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

For initial issuance of a photo ID, the applicant must bring one acceptable proof of identification (see Publication 195US or Publication 195NC), Social Security Card or Social Security Administration ineligibility letter and acceptable form/s of address verification. In the case of homeless individuals, PennDOT will accept a letter from a shelter indicating an individual is staying at the shelter or uses the shelter as an address of residency to pick up mail.

For renewal of a photo ID, the applicant must renewal at one of PennDOT Driver License Centers. The applicant will be required to certify on the application that they are homeless, and a fee will be waived at the time of the renewal.

The law covers initial issuance and renewals for photo IDs for those who qualify for free issuance due to their homeless status. Duplicate IDs are not covered under the law change. Duplicate fees continue to apply and cannot be waived. The law does not cover nor does it allow for waiver of any driver license product-related fees.

Additional information can be found on the Driver and Vehicle Services website, www.dmv.pa.gov. 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.

Help is available for Pennsylvanians who need help with paying for food, accessing health care, and other essential needs. Applications for public assistance programs can be submitted online at www.compass.state.pa.us. Those who prefer to submit paper documentation can pick one up from their local County Assistance Office (CAO), print it from the website, or requested by phone at 1-800-692-7462. While CAOs remain closed to the public, paper applications can be returned via mail or dropped off in a CAO’s secure drop box, if available. You do not need to know your own eligibility in order to apply, and all Pennsylvanians are encouraged to apply for assistance, so they do not have to weather these difficult times alone.

SAVING 3-YEAR-OLD FROM RUNAWAY BUGGY

O
n the afternoon of Sept. 30, Steve Cochran was traveling along State Route 208 in Washington Township, Clarion County, when he noticed a horse pulling an Amish buggy became spooked. The horse began running erratically down the road. When Cochran noticed there was a small child in the buggy, he understood the severity of the situation.

"There was no stopping that horse," said Cochran, a bridge inspection crane technician supervisor for PennDOT’s Indiana-based District 10.

Cochran maneuvered his vehicle in front of the buggy. He tried to signal oncoming vehicles, so they’d be cautious. At times, the vehicles were going 25-30 miles per hour. This continued for two to three miles.

Eventually, the horse turned down a township road and into a field where a Pennsylvania State Trooper was able to get the 3-year-old girl from the buggy and return her safely to her mother.

For his efforts, Cochran was given PennDOT’s Workplace Hero Award. The award is open to PennDOT employees who, during work hours, take actions that prevent the death or serious injury of a co-worker or member of the public.
In 2020 statewide traffic deaths increased to 1,129 from the record low of 1,059 in 2019. Last year was the second-lowest number of highway fatalities recorded and overall fatalities continue to trend downward.

Pennsylvania roadway deaths were up about 6 percent in 2020 despite an approximate 20 percent reduction in traffic counts statewide last year when compared to 2019. This increase is in line with a recently released report from the National Safety Council, showing preliminary data estimates national motorcycle deaths are up 8 percent.

While the overall number of highway deaths increased last year, decreases in fatalities were noted in crashes involving drivers aged 65 or older, head on/opposite direction side swipes, crashes involving distracted drivers, and pedestrian crashes. Fatalities in drivers 65 years old or older dropped from 281 in 2019 to 243 in 2020. Head on crashes/opposite direction side swipe fatali
ties also decreased from 158 in 2019 to 128 last year. There were 47 fatalities in 2020 crashes involving distracted drivers compared to 62 in 2019.

Additionally, the year-to-year longer-term trends also continue to decrease. For example, compared to 2016, there were 59 fewer total traffic deaths, 86 fewer deaths in lane departure crashes, and 60 fewer fatalities involving unrestrained occupants in crashes.

The following crash types saw fatality increases in 2020:

- Crashes involving single vehicle run-off-the-road – 506 fatalities, up from 447 in 2019;
- Crashes involving local roads – 224 fatalities, up from 186 in 2019;
- Crashes involving motorcycles – 217 fatalities, up from 174 in 2019; and
- Crashes involving speeding – 188 fatalities, up from 162 in 2019.

According to national data, over 90 percent of crashes are caused by driver behavior. For this reason, PennDOT focuses on data trends to drive enforcement and education improvements and invests $18 million annually in federal grant funds statewide to support these behavioral safety programs.

In addition to behavioral safety, PennDOT focuses on infrastructure improvements to roadways in an effort to further reduce fatalities and serious injuries. Approximately $477 million in Federal Highway Safety Improvement Program funds has been invested in 444 unique safety projects from 2015 to 2019. During that same timeframe, another $50 million of state funds was invested in low-cost safety improvements at approximately 3,000 locations. Examples of low-cost safety countermeasures include centerline and edge-line rumble strips and signing and pavement markings.

For more information on reportable crash data, visit PennDOT’s Pennsylvania Crash Information Tool (PCIT) website, www.crashinfo.penndot.gov. Under “Crash Downloads,” the “Reportable Crash Fatality Statistics” spreadsheet is updated with 2020 fatalities; 2020 crash statistics and suspected serious injury statistics are not yet available. The "Custom Query Tool" and additional crash downloads will be available later this month.
MEET BRANDON ZEIDERS

Brandon has friends and family who work at PennDOT, so he knew about the good benefits that the state offered. He applied for a position with PennDOT maintenance because he was tired of living in hotel rooms while working out of town. He had worked for a few years in construction and then landed a job making kitchen cabinets, but after 15 years, he wanted more for himself and his family. He reapplied to PennDOT.

His wife, Jennifer, called PennDOT’s Human Resources office to check on the status of Brandon’s application. It was during this discussion with the HR representative she learned of positions called Transportation Construction Inspector (TCI) or a Transportation Technician (TT). Brandon’s background in construction gave him many of the qualifications needed for a job like that and he was encouraged to apply for one of those positions instead.

Even though he knew it was seasonal work, Brandon took a leap of faith and accepted a position in District 3 as a Transportation Technician. He left his ten-minute commute to his cabinet making job to work at PennDOT for $4 less an hour. He started with PennDOT on September 14 and worked until November 20, 2015. Four days later, his daughter, Olivia, was born.

In February 2016, Brandon returned to PennDOT as a full-time employee, but between November and February, he wondered if he had done the right thing by leaving his cabinet making job.

"I would definitely tell anyone to apply for a seasonal or temporary position within PennDOT, the benefits, work schedule flexibility are great," he said. "Don’t be disgusted with it being only temporary, what it could lead to full time could be one of the best decisions you’ve ever made, I know it was for me."

In the summer of 2019, after completing a paving project in McClure, the Borough Manager & Borough Council sent a thank you letter of appreciation to District 3 thanking Brandon and his supervisor for their professionalism and excellent customer service. It is times like this when an employee feels "PennDOT Proud."

Brandon, Jennifer and Olivia are Minnesota Viking fans and have attended several games when they are playing a neighboring team.

"I also enjoy collecting sports autographs & sports memorabilia," he said.

MEET CARLY MATLACK

Once upon a time, Carly Matlack was an Information Technology (IT) substitute at Clearfield Area School, assisting full-time staff. In the few years she was there, she gathered a great deal of knowledge in just a couple of years.

While Carly was substituting in the IT department, a friend recommended that she apply at PennDOT, knowing if she was hired as a seasonal employee, down the road she may be asked to join as a full-time employee. The idea of having one full-time job really appealed to her.

"Working the same job year-round meant I didn't have to re-adjust to my jobs twice a year," said Carly, who worked for DCNR in the summertime.

When she first started at PennDOT, she approached it as an opportunity to advance her career.

One memory that stands out for Carly is when the governor declared a state of emergency due to a heavy winter storm. No traffic was allowed on Interstate 80.

"It was surreal to witness, from the traffic cameras, a route that was always bussing with activity," said Carly. "Even in the wee hours of the morning."

Carly started out as a temporary Regional Traffic Management Center (RTMC) Operator in the Winter Maintenance Program, starting at the end of October 2016 and is now a full-time RTMC Operator.

Every year is filled with changes and shifts in the department. She feels changes and challenges are not difficult, because the same coworkers are adjusting with her.

"And every one of them copes with the changes differently, so it's just one of many job aspects that helps us work together," said Carly.

It's safe to say that Carly made a good choice in seeking PennDOT as a career.

JOIN OUR TEAM
BE PART OF OUR STORY
Seasonal Help Turns Full Time
MEET DAMON WAGNER

Damon Wagner started at PennDOT as a seasonal worker driving a snowplow in October 1999 and never left. Now he works full time as a Highway Administration Program Manager, but the title he may be known for locally is "Coach."

Damon has three daughters who all play softball (the youngest - age 8, the middle – age 11 and the oldest daughter – age 13). They live in rural Renovo, PA, and while a softball organization existed, he felt it had room to grow. Like many parents who volunteer, Damon started coaching seven years ago out of necessity, because in most rural communities it is tough to get volunteers. He was President of the travel softball organization that his daughter played on in 2018-19 and presently coaches three, girls’ teams: Jr High School Softball as well as two traveling softball teams at both the 14u and 12u level. The organization has grown, and teams have been added this past year, a real testament to the commitment Damon has for his passion of coaching and improving structural organizations. The teams travel primarily from April until August through the states of Pennsylvania, Maryland, New York, and Virginia.

"We camp on weekends when traveling for tournaments. That is what the girls will remember the most, not if they won or lost that day on the field," said Damon.

Damon used to coach boys wrestling at Bucktail High School, but when he started to work with the girls' softball teams, he discovered his biggest challenge was learning how to relate to them. He explained that one girl may do better if he is stern and keeps pushing them, while another may need all "rainbows and sunshine" to motivate her.

"The bigger picture is that this is a whole lot more than softball. I realized that for the girls, I was a role model and mentor to them, teaching them how to be productive citizens in society," said Damon.

And the families that he has met throughout the years has been great, too. "We spend almost every weekend together from April until August, so we get to know each other pretty well," said Damon.

After coaching three teams of girls’ softball, he understands that it may have helped him learn how to communicate better as a dad with his daughters off the field. When you talk with him, you can tell he loves his title of "Dad" the most.

MIDDLETOWN TRAIN STATION SLATED FOR COMPLETION BY LATE 2021

The Middletown train station is being constructed on Ann Street at West Main Street (Route 230) construction continues to progress and slated for completion by late 2021. The new station will provide ADA accessibility, improve multimodal connectivity, and anchor station-area redevelopment

The $24.4 million project will feature: A central high-level (accessible) platform; A pedestrian overpass to the platform; Elevator and stair towers; Accessible ramps; On-site parking; and Designated bus loading zones.

During the most recent updates, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) Contractor Wickersham used a heavy-duty crane to lift and set a fully assembled pedestrian bridge. It was then attached to both elevator towers and will provide safe access over the railroad tracks leading to a center boarding platform.

Precast panels are also being installed to create the 500-foot level boarding platform.

PennDOT continues to lead the extensive coordination and ensure station plans consider multimodal connectivity as well as the Borough of Middletown’s downtown streetscape improvements, Capital Area Transit’s connectivity, and Harrisburg International Airport’s airport master plan.

Plan the Keystone is an initiative to improve passenger rail stations on Pennsylvania’s Keystone Corridor between Harrisburg and Philadelphia. For more information on the planning, design, and construction of Keystone Corridor improvement projects, visit http://www.planthekeystone.com.
MEET TOM MELLO, ERIE COUNTY ASSISTANT MANAGER
By Jill Harry, Community Relations Coordinator, District 1

Longtime Erie County employee Tom Mello can look back on a career full of pothole filling, emergency roadway responses, and of course, snow.

"People say you are married to this place in the wintertime, and it is so true," Mello said with a chuckle during a conversation about his upcoming retirement.

The Erie County Assistant County Manager is a 35-year veteran of the snowplowing game and is proud of the service he and his colleague provide to residents and motorists.

"I truly believe [Erie County] employees are right up there with anyone in the country when it comes to plowing snow and managing winters. Our operators are really good at what they do," Mello said. "Anyone can patch a pothole, but not everyone can plow a foot of snow."

Mello joined the Erie maintenance crew in 1985, as an equipment operator trainee. He applied at the suggestion of a family member and was attracted to the position because of the department's benefits package.

Over the years, he moved through the ranks, first as an operator A then a B. By 2004, Mello had been certified on several different pieces of equipment but wanted to do more.

"I just started getting bored, so I jumped on as a foreman," he said.

From there is spend several years leading different crews and inspecting different activities, such as tree trimming, herbicide applications, and mowing.

"I pretty much did it all," he said.

"Tom's job knowledge, work experience and high level of dedication has contributed to the county's continued success," said Jim Shaut, Erie County Manager.

When the opportunity to move up the ranks came again in 2014, Mello became an assistant county manager. He will retire as much at the end of the month.

Among his duties as an assistant, Mello took on the unofficial designation as the county's public face for winter operations. Mello handle numerous media interviews, appearing on camera several times a season. He says it was an easy part of the job because the crews work hard during wintertime.

"When you are an expert, [talking to reporters] is easy to do," he said.

As he closes out his career, Mello says there are some highlights that really stand out among the memories.

In 1995, he and a fellow employee Wes Hess saw two older gentlemen fall from a boat into a cold lake. The two grabbed a canoe that was one scene and used their shovels to paddle out to the men, pulling them to safety. For their actions Mello and Hess received a department award for Heroism, given to them directly from former Transportation Secretary Bradley Mallory.

He also looks at his attendance awards with pride as they represent a personal victory over throat cancer. Mello was diagnosed in 2012 and spent several months on medical leave as he underwent treatments. "For me, that is my biggest accomplishment, being healthy and not taking any sick time," he said.

Another top memory for Mello was receiving the Governor's Award in 2018. Mello was part of the Erie County team honored by Gov. Tom Wolf from their handling of the record-breaking storm that hit Erie during the Christmas season on in 2017.

That Christmas was just one of more than a dozen he's worked over the years, including the very first year he was with the department.

So, what changes has he seen over all those years of working holidays? Easy – technology.

"The trucks are much more powerful now, better wings, bigger plows," he said. And the weather forecasting has become more accurate, making it easier for them to do their jobs and do it well.

"Safety was come a long way, too," he added.

His advice for new employees is simple, be a part of the team and rise above any workplace negativity. "Get on as many committees and be involved as you can be here at PennDOT."

He says that is the secret to his success.

In his retirement, Mello plans to take some time to settle in and then find a way to get more involved in his community. The lifelong Erie County resident has two adult children, a son who works in the golfing industry in Florida and a daughter who will soon graduate with a degree in nursing. "I'm extremely proud of those two," he said.

"It has been a pleasure to work with Tom over the years and he will be missed by all," Shaut said. "Retirement might be an adjustment for a hardworking guy like Tom, but we all hope he has the opportunity to enjoy hunting, golfing, summers on the lake boating and spending time with friends and family. Congratulations on your retirement, Tom!"

"As a career, [PennDOT] was the best thing I could have done," Mello said. "I have met incredible people and traveled the state."

"I'm going to miss the District 1 people for sure," Mello added. "It's been an amazing career."
PennDOT raises awareness of laws that are important to the safety of our motorists through education, social media, and outreach with our partners, like the Pennsylvania State Police, in hope that it creates behavioral change.

Safety is everyone’s responsibility. By obeying the rules of the road, everyone can do their part to reduce the number of crashes and fatalities on Pennsylvania roads. Always wear your seat belt and never drive aggressively, distracted, or impaired.

Here are the laws highlighted in 2021 and their common-sense explanations.

**Move Over Law**

Pennsylvania’s Move Over Law requires drivers approaching an emergency response area who are unable to safely merge into a lane further away from the response area to slow to at least 20 mph less than the posted speed limit. An emergency response area is where an emergency vehicle has its lights flashing, or where road crews or emergency responders have lighted flares, posted signs, or try to warn travelers. Drivers must move over or slow down for all responders, including police, fire, and ambulance crews, as well as stopped tow trucks and maintenance vehicles. Additionally, a similar regulation requires motorists to move over or slow down when approaching a stationary trash or recycling truck.

Failure to move over or slowdown will result in a citation that carries a fine of $500 for first-time offenders, $1,000 for a second offense, and $2,000 and a 90-day license suspension for a third or subsequent offense. Penalties are increased for incidents that seriously injure or kill another person.

Disabled vehicles are covered by the Move Over law when they display at least two of the following markings:

- Vehicular hazard signal lamps
- Caution signs or other traffic control device
- Road flares

Another Pennsylvania Law requires any truck class III or greater, truck tractor, bus, or any motor vehicle towing a trailer carry at least three portable emergency warning devices and display the devices when stopped on a roadway or shoulder for 10 minutes outside of an urban district, or on a divided highway anywhere, even in an urban district (like I-95 in Philadelphia).

**Hearing Impairment Devices**

Title 75, Section 3314 prohibits any driver from wearing or using one or more headphones or earphones while behind the wheel. Wearing headphones while behind the wheel limits a driver’s ability to hear sirens belonging to emergency responders.

This law does not prohibit the use of hearing aids or other devices for improving the hearing of the driver, nor does it prohibit the use of communication equipment by the driver of an emergency vehicle or by motorcycle operators.

**Wipers On, Headlights On**

Title 75, Section 4302 requires that all vehicles should have their headlights on any time the windshield wipers are operating in continuous or intermittent use due to inclement weather (including rain, snow, sleet, or mist).

**Traffic-control Signal Laws**

Title 75, Section 3112 provides general rules for traffic-control signals, including inoperable or malfunctioning signals if a traffic signal is out of operation or not functioning properly (including if the sensor does not detect the vehicle), motorists with green and yellow signals can proceed with caution, motorists with red signals are to stop and then proceed in the same manner as at a stop sign.

Title 75, Section 3114 provides rules for flashing signals, including flashing yellow. When a traffic-control signal is flashing red, drivers should proceed as at a stop sign. When it is flashing yellow, drivers may proceed through the intersection with caution.

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Watch the video at https://youtu.be/80nuENjCeA8 for more information on correctly using a flashing yellow arrow turn

**Motorcycle Helmet Laws**

Pennsylvania Law requires that anyone who operates or rides a motorcycle (including an autocycle) must wear protective headgear unless he or she is 21 years of age or older and has been licensed to operate a motorcycle for two full years or has completed a motorcycle safety course approved by PennDOT or the Motorcycle Safety Foundation. In addition, the operator, or an occupant of a three-wheeled motorcycle or autocycle equipped with an enclosed cab is exempt from wearing a helmet.

The Pennsylvania Motorcycle Safety Program offers free motorcycle safety courses to Pennsylvania residents and active-duty military with a valid Pennsylvania driver’s license and motorcycle permit. Visit www.dmv.pa.gov/Driver-Services/Motorcyclists/PAMSP.

**Bicycle Helmet Laws**

Pennsylvania law requires everyone under the age of 12 to wear a helmet when riding a bicycle. This applies to anyone operating the bicycle, riding as a passenger, or riding in an attached restraining seat or trailer. The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation strongly recommends that all bicyclists wear helmets whenever they ride. You can ensure a proper helmet fit using guidelines found at: www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa/files/8019_fitting-a-helmet.pdf.

**Seat Belt Laws**

Pennsylvania’s primary seat belt law requires drivers and passengers under 18 years of age to buckle up anywhere in the vehicle. Under Pennsylvania’s Primary Child Passenger Safety Law, children under the age of four must be properly restrained in an approved child safety seat anywhere in the vehicle and children ages 4-8 must be restrained in an appropriate booster seat. The "Child Passenger Safety" law update, which went into effect in August 2016, states that children are required to be buckled into a rear-facing car seat until they are age 2 or meet the maximum weight or height requirements set by the manufacturer of the seat.

Pennsylvania’s secondary seat belt law requires drivers and passengers 18 years and older wear a seat belt when behind the wheel or in the front passenger seat. If you are a driver 18 or older and police pull you over for another violation, you’ll receive a second ticket if you or your front-seat passengers aren’t wearing seat belts.

For more information on highway safety, visit www.PennDOT.gov/safety.

**PENNDOT WINS NATIONAL TSMO AWARDS FOCUSED ON IMPROVING SAFETY AND EFFICIENCY OF PENNSYLVANIA ROADWAYS**

PennDOT was recently recognized with two 2020 Annual Transportation Systems Management & Operations (TSMO) awards presented by the National Operations Center of Excellence (NOCoE).

“I am so proud of the department and the recognition that we’ve received,” said PennDOT Secretary Yassmin Gramian. “These awards showcase the dedication and passion of our Operations team to continually improve safety and congestion on our roadways.”

TSMO is a set of integrated strategies to optimize the performance of operations on existing infrastructure through implementation of multimodal, cross-jurisdictional systems, services, and projects designed to preserve capacity and improve security, safety, and reliability of a transportation system. Simply put, TSMO is focused on improving how roadways operate within the restraints of PennDOT’s existing roadway infrastructure.

PennDOT’s TSMO Performance Program and Traffic Operations Analytics (TOA) Tool (PDF) won first place for Best TSMO Project of the year. The Performance Program brought together internal and external information allowing for more data-driven outcomes for congestion planning, incident response, and safety for all motorists. By housing the data on one TOA platform, team members quickly found that crowd sourced data from Waze and INRIX detected 86.7% of reportable crashes on major roads and

created solutions for Operations personnel to increase the timeliness of incident detection. The Performance Program also created the first ever "congestion pie chart," which allows Planning partners and PennDOT better understand the cause of congestion, thus more effectively tailor TSMO solutions to meet those needs. This data will lead to safer work zones, queue protection corridor deployments in the field, and timely incident detection to help reduce secondary crashes.

PennDOT’s TSMO Regional Operations Plans (PDF) won first place for Project Selection and Prioritization. Regional Operations Plans were developed in cooperation with stakeholders including metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) and rural planning organizations (RPOs), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission, local emergency responders, transit agencies, universities, the local National Weather Service office, as well as PennDOT staff from across the state. Regional Operations Plans play an important role in regional Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) processes by helping to secure future capital funding for projects incorporating TSMO solution. The plans resulted in strong relationships with planning partners leading buy-in and funding support.

Visit our website for more information on PennDOT’s TSMO Efforts at: www.penndot.gov/ProjectAndPrograms/operations.
PennDOT’s ongoing initiative to deploy adaptive traffic signal technology took a significant step forward recently with the opening of bids for Phase 1 of the adjacent corridor improvement portion of the Interstate 76 (I-76) Corridor Comprehensive Transportation Management Plan.

The apparent low bidder was Armour and Sons Electric of Langhorne, Bucks County. They will be installing adaptive signal equipment at 50 locations along the State Route 23 and Gulph Road corridors on the west side of the Schuylkill River.

"The equipment should be installed and operational by early September, and we'll use that do the pilot evaluation of PennDOT’s management of corridors," said Steve Gault, P.E., chief of the Traffic Systems Management and Operations (TSMO) Arterials and Planning Section.

The I-76 Corridor plan aims to alleviate tough congestion issues along the Schuylkill Expressway that carries more than 130,000 vehicles a day in Montgomery County. In addition to the adaptive signals on routes adjacent to the expressway, the plan calls for part-time shoulder running, variable speed limits, ramp metering and multi-modal improvements.

PennDOT is also working on upgrades to traffic signals along Henry Avenue in Philadelphia and future segments of the overall plan include traffic signal upgrades along both Ridge Pike in Montgomery County and Ridge Avenue in Philadelphia. The overall plan envisions upgrades at roughly 160 locations.

Across Pennsylvania, adaptive signal technology has been installed at approximately 650 locations, Gault said.

Adaptive Signal Control Technology (ASCT) adjusts signal timings in real time based on current traffic conditions.

Deployment of the technology is championed by the Federal Highway Administration’s (FHWA) Every Day Counts Program (EDC) and the Pennsylvania State Transportation Innovation Council (STIC).

As part of that effort, PennDOT continues to work on developing Automated Traffic Signal Performance Measures (ATSPMs) that involve the use of data to analyze and optimize traffic signal performance. The STIC’s Safety and Traffic Operations Technical Advisory Group also continues to work on guidance and training to help users interpret data and use it to produce better signal timing and reduce congestion. ATSPMs will play a role in evaluating PennDOT ownership and management of traffic signals for the I-76 corridor projects.

And PennDOT continues to help fund local traffic signal improvement through the Green Light-Go Program.

"Using adaptive signal technology is a case-by-case decision on where it is appropriate," Gault said. "It’s a tool in the tool box ... and we need to look at each one to see if it is the right tool to apply in that situation."

"The department has been deploying the adaptive traffic signal technology since 2011," added Ashwin B. Patel, P.E., senior manager in the Traffic Engineering and Safety Division in PennDOT’s District 6 in the Philadelphia region. "The adaptive traffic signal technology has been proven effective to reduce the number of stops and improve travel times along the corridor. The reliable traffic signal communication infrastructure and robust maintenance practices are key to the optimum performance of the adaptive traffic signal technology."
MEET JOHN LOGAN: TRANSPORTATION PLANNING SPECIALIST WITH PENNDOT’S BUREAU OF AVIATION

For the past 19 years, Mr. John Logan has been with PennDOT’s Bureau of Aviation. John began his career as an Aviation Specialist. His duties included performing safety inspections of airports and heliports, evaluating proposed off-airport construction and other potential hazards to air navigation around public airports. John’s biggest accomplishment as an Aviation Specialist took place assisting in the development of the rooftop heliport at UPMC Presbyterian Hospital in Pittsburgh.

In the fall of 2020, John moved to a new position within the Bureau of Aviation as a Transportation Planning Specialist for the western portion of the Commonwealth. John conducts reviews of airport planning and environmental documents associated with airport projects. He performs duties as a project manager for airport master plan update studies which is a requirement for forty airports in the state that receive Federal Aviation Administration funding. He also assists the Bureau’s Planning Manager with project requests for the 4-year funding program and the Aviation Transportation Assistance Program. Also, John will be conducting annual airport regional planning sessions this summer that will aid airports with their planning, development, and prioritization of aviation projects.

Prior to joining the Bureau, John served in the USAF Reserve at the 911th Airlift Wing located at the Pittsburgh International Airport. He was a C-130H pilot, performing tactical airlift to include airdrop of personnel and equipment. He held positions as Wing Flight Safety Officer, Chief Pilot and Assistant Director of Operations before retiring in 2015. In the late 1990’s to early 2000’s, John was a first officer for US Airways, conducting second-in-command duties during commercial flight operations within the United States.

Even while John was flying for the USAF or as a civilian, he did not know the Bureau of Aviation existed within PennDOT. John stated, "The Department should continue to highlight all other modes besides highway and bridge, especially aviation. This dovetails nicely into our Multimodal Transportation Deputate."

Outside of working, John does have a passion for hunting, fishing and anything related to the outdoors.

BRANDYWINE VALLEY SCENIC BYWAY RECEIVES NATIONAL DESIGNATION

The United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) recently announced that the Brandywine Valley Scenic Byway in Chester and Delaware counties has received a National Scenic Byways (NSB) Designation.

"We are thrilled that another one of our Pennsylvania's Byways has achieved National Scenic Byways status," said PennDOT Secretary Yassmin Gramian. "The beautiful, historic Brandywine Valley Scenic Byway is more than deserving of this honor."

The Brandywine Valley Scenic Byway directly adjoins a national scenic byway of the same name in the state of Delaware and extends the route into Pennsylvania’s Brandywine Valley. The history encompassed within the Byway spans from the settling and early development of the nation through the Revolutionary War, the struggle for freedom on the Underground Railroad, to the creation of world class cultural institutions by the families who had made the Brandywine Valley their home. The scenic qualities arise from the land itself, which fortunately has been protected due to its fine agricultural assets and the forward thinking and means that the residents possessed to protect and conserve the landscape.

The 25-mile route in Pennsylvania, when joined with the Delaware Brandywine Valley National Scenic Byway, forms a figure eight encompassing Route 52 starting at the Delaware state line, traveling north to Route 162, and returning via Creek Road back to the Delaware state line.

Commenting on the designation, John Haedrich, Brandywine Valley Scenic Byway Commission chair said, "The vision for the Brandywine Valley Scenic Byway is that it will continue to be a place with a deep and varied history recognizable in the landscape and intertwined with a distinctive natural environment and pastoral scenic vistas—vibrant threads which together make a rich tapestry for the use and enjoyment of residents and visitors alike."

The National Scenic Byways Program, established by Congress in 1991, recognizes historic, scenic, natural, archeological, cultural, and recreational qualities and promotes tourism and economic development in nearby communities. Pennsylvania created its own Byways Program in 2001 - as a local grassroots program - and is managed by PennDOT. Pennsylvania boasts 21 byways, four of which now are FHWA National Scenic Byways.
PennDOT is quite proud of its Adopt A Highway program where volunteers beautify roadways two miles at a time. Through the program, a civic or volunteer group signs a two-year agreement to pick up litter at least twice a year. In return, PennDOT posts recognition signs along the adopted roadway to give the group full credit for their efforts.

We are delighted to share some well-deserved recognition for Seipstown Grange #1657 that achieved 30 years of participation in this community service. Their accomplishment was documented in this article that recently appeared in the Lehigh Valley Press News - written by journalist and Grange Adopt A Highway volunteer Ann Wertman: Grange celebrates 30 years in PennDOT program at - https://tinyurl.com/y6xdtvdw.

In addition to the article, Wertman commented on the Grange’s commitment as follows:

"Looking back these 30 years on a litter cleanup detail covering 11 miles of highway ...

1st... I need to THANK all the dedicated Seipstown Grange #1657 team members and our local community supporters, including our local 4-H clubs, who made this journey possible, including many no longer able to participate and many who have earned their wings... hopefully there is no litter in Heaven. And, thank you to everyone who is fighting litter wherever they are located!

2nd... You love the natural beauty of our Earth and quickly REALIZE this tedious and sadly repetitious community service you’ve endeared yourself to for hours along what feels like a public speedway IS IN YOUR BLOOD when for days after a cleanup you count every new piece of litter which appears with select words under your breath and ask WHY?

3rd... You contemplate the image of every bag plus each miscellaneous item too large for a garbage bag collected during these 30 years from these many miles being on one huge heap... SADLY we would have a new mountain to name and EVEN MORE SAD, without everyone’s future dedication to doing their part each and every day to eliminate this problem... a mountain range appears."

PennDOT Roadway Program Coordinator Carl Wesneski offered high praise for Seipstown Grange #1657.

"PennDOT’s Adopt A Highway program would not be possible without the tireless efforts of our groups. With that recognition, PennDOT congratulates Seipstown Grange on their 30+ years of active participation in Adopt A Highway," he said.

"Their dedication epitomizes the very best of Pennsylvanians and the AAH program! PennDOT looks forward to the next 30 years of continued partnership with Seipstown Grange. Once again congratulations on this momentous milestone!"

Those interested in signing up for PennDOT’s Adopt A Highway program are encouraged to visit Adopt A Highway on the Roadside Beautification page of www.PennDOT.gov.

DEDICATED ADOPT A HIGHWAY GROUPS VOLUNTEER TO PICK-UP LITTER
In our ongoing effort to improve the safety, mobility, and situational awareness for road users traveling through work zones, PennDOT has embraced evolving technology and is making significant advances with our Integrated Smart Work Zone Initiative.

"We have seen meaningful progress," said Daniel P. Farley, P.E., chief of the Transportation Systems Management and Operations (TSMO) Operations and Performance Section. "We are looking to implement new technologies and new strategies."

New advances will be piloted over the winter on projects on Interstate 78 in eastern Pennsylvania and on Interstate 83 in south central Pennsylvania.

The improvements being considered include upgraded systems to alert travelers in real time to backups forming approaching work zones, variable speed limit signs, ramp metering to regulate traffic flow, travel time messaging, and Integrated Corridor Management (ICM).

PennDOT’s first use of the ICM approach was used on Aramingo Avenue adjacent to Interstate 95 in Philadelphia.

"If we have a traffic signal system parallel to an expressway, we have the ability to establish coordinated plans to evaluate queues and congestion and in some cases redirect or suggest redirection of traffic to the arterial network with enhanced signs and timing done in an automated fashion," Farley said.

Software upgrades associated with the ongoing Interstate 76 traffic improvement project also opened the door to these advanced traffic strategies, Farley said.

Aside from the smarter work zone strategies, PennDOT also implemented speed camera enforcement in March 2020. There are 17 camera vehicles posted statewide, and there have been more than 2,000 deployments statewide, Farley said.

"We have a lot of good information helping us improve how we do work zone designs moving forward, how we implement speed limit reduction policy as well as better understand how we improve safety of our workers," Farley said.

"As this data continues to improve and as other data becomes more available, PennDOT will continue to look at opportunities to identify, plan, and implement effective Smart Work Zone applications that overall provide a safety and mobility benefit to road users and workers on each project," Farley noted.

Smarter Work Zones is a Federal Highway Administration Every Day Counts Round 3 (EDC-3) innovation that Pennsylvania championed and promoted through the Pennsylvania State Transportation Innovation Council (STIC).
The Pennsylvania State Police (PSP), the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) and the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission (PTC) hosted an event to kick off National Work Zone Awareness Week (NWZAW). The week, designated to highlight the critical importance of safe driving through work zones. The theme of this year’s work-zone safety campaign was "Drive safe. Work safe. Save lives."

Surrounded by first-responder vehicles and equipment, Lieutenant Colonel Scott Price, deputy commissioner of operations for the Pennsylvania State Police, began the event by acknowledging the dangers faced by first responders while providing roadside assistance.

Pennsylvania’s Move Over Law requires drivers to change lanes when approaching an emergency response area. Updates to the law, which include a new point system for violators and sets a fine of $500 for first-time offenders, $1,000 for a second offense, and $2,000 plus 90-day license suspension for a third or subsequent offense, take effect on April 27. The revamped Move Over Law also mandates drivers change lanes or slow down when approaching disabled vehicles when at least two emergency displays, such as vehicle hazard lamps, road flares, and/or cones or caution signs are present.

According to PennDOT data, in 2020 there were 1,412 work zone crashes, resulting in 15 fatalities. Additionally, since 1970, PennDOT has lost 89 workers in the line of duty. The PA Turnpike has lost 45 workers since 1940.

In an effort to change unsafe driving behaviors in work zones, Pennsylvania implemented the Automated Work Zone Speed Enforcement (AWSZE) program in March 2020. Pennsylvania’s AWSZE program uses vehicle-mounted systems to detect and record motorists exceeding posted work zone speed limits by 11 miles per hour or more using electronic speed timing devices. AWSZE systems are operational in active work zones where workers are present.

Results included in the AWSZE Annual Legislative Report, released today online at workzonecameras.PennDOT.gov, show that the program is meeting its goals of reducing work zone speeds, changing driver behavior, and improving work zone safety for both workers and motorists. Work zone speeds trended downward throughout AWSZE enforced work zones. Data shows a 16.6 percent reduction in the percentage of vehicles traveling over the posted work zone speed limit and a 43.6 percent reduction in the percentage of vehicles excessively speeding (11 miles per hour or more over the posted work zone speed limit). There is also evidence that overall work zone speeds have declined in projects that have had long-term deployments, regardless if the AWSZE units have been deployed or not. Additionally, overall work zone crashes in Pennsylvania work zones were down 19 percent in 2020.

After limited travel during the pandemic, 93 percent of drivers are now returning to the roadway and 62 percent plan to travel by car this summer for vacations, according to Outdoor Advertising Association of America (OAAA).

For more information on work zone safety or Pennsylvania’s updated Move Over Law, visit www.PennDOT.gov/Safety.
BLACK HISTORY MONTH WITH A FOCUS ON EQUITY IN TRANSPORTATION

By PennDOT Secretary Yassmin Gramian, P.E.

During Black History Month, we paused to reflect on the more than 400 years of Black history and heritage that has helped to shape America. We sparked important conversations about representation, identity, and diversity. And we pause to remember the dreamers, doers, innovators, record-breakers, and symbols of pride who teach us lessons from the past so that we can carry on their legacy.

Part of that legacy is about realizing a future where everyone - no matter where they live, how much money they make, or who they are - has access to the same opportunities and services.

A core part of that vision is the concept of transportation equity. This, along with continuing to build and support a diverse and inclusive organization, is a personal passion of mine as PennDOT Secretary. Access to safe and reliable transportation is an issue that affects all Americans, regardless of where they live. Public transportation connects people to jobs, health care, childcare and schools, grocery stores, housing, and more - particularly those who live in disadvantaged communities.

Yet, race and transportation have long been inextricably linked in the United States, whether it’s federally funded highways that plowed through Black and Brown neighborhoods, or segregated streetcars, busses, and trolleys. Our nation’s infrastructure investments and policies have not been aligned to thoroughly address systemic racism, impacting generations of people of color.

Sixty-five years ago, Rosa Parks bravely refused to give up her seat on a public bus. The Montgomery bus boycott resulted in a landmark Supreme Court ruling that made segregation on public buses unconstitutional. While this was a seminal moment in civil rights history, we still have a lot of work to do.

As a transportation agency, PennDOT must continue to work to make transportation safer, accessible, and more equitable. We must be willing to have uncomfortable conversations around how we may have – however unintentionally – been complicit in upholding structures that do not serve everyone equitably.

Please join me in honoring the contributions of Black Americans - and continue the work to realize Rosa Parks’ activism to ride with dignity.

PENNDOT CELEBRATES WOMEN’S HISTORY

By PennDOT Secretary Yassmin Gramian, P.E.

More than 50 years ago, a group of researchers gave a group of elementary school children a simple instruction: draw a scientist. The classic "draw-a-scientist" experiment was repeated many times over the years. Of the 5,000 drawings collected between 1966 and 1977, only 28 – or less than 1 percent – drew a woman scientist. All of them were drawn by girls.

This is the era that I grew up in. Many years ago, long before I had ever stepped foot inside PennDOT headquarters, I was a young girl who dreamed of one day becoming an engineer. But in the 1970’s, women made up only 7 percent of the STEM workforce. There were few women in the industry or role models to look up to, particularly one who looked like me. It was an uphill climb.

Recently, during Women’s History Month, I wanted to celebrate all of the remarkable women who helped to build America and carve out a place for future generations - including roles for women in STEM, transportation and government. They were strong, courageous, compassionate, and tough, qualities that paved the way for diversity in the workplace and the addition of unique perspectives.

Today, women make up 28 percent of the STEM workforce and just 13 percent of engineers. Challenges amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic have had a disproportionate social and economic impact on women, as many have borne the brunt of childcare duties and job losses - including those in STEM careers.

I believe the emphasis on STEM for women is fundamental, that recruitment of girls to engineering school is critical, and the skills of women are needed in places like PennDOT. It’s so important that we have people with various backgrounds at the table to help tackle our most pressing transportation challenges.

I am committed to engaging in conversations with students and young professionals throughout Pennsylvania to help encourage more women and people of color to pursue and excel in STEM careers. It is critical to engage the next generation in the discussions about the changing transportation needs, equity, and the latest innovations in safety and transportation. The COVID-19 pandemic caused a paradigm shift for the world and it requires a new leadership approach to reimagine how we connect and work.
While keeping its focus on maintaining and improving the state’s large network of highways and bridges, PennDOT continues to address both multimodal and environmental needs through the use of pervious pavement.

A product of collaboration through the State Transportation Innovation Council (STIC), pervious pavement installation is helping advance improvements to parking lots and trails at various locations across Pennsylvania while meeting stormwater management goals.

“This program reflects our ongoing commitment to pursue innovative solutions to the varied challenges we face managing the far-flung transportation network across Pennsylvania,” said Lydia E. Peddicord, P.E., chief of the Pavement Design and Analysis Unit in PennDOT’s Bureau of Project Delivery.

Pervious pavements provide a valuable stormwater management benefit to help offset the costs of constructing and maintaining traditional Stormwater Control Measures, like retention basins. Asphalt and concrete pervious pavements allow water to pass through the surface and temporarily settle in a stone reservoir before infiltrating into the ground. Although not appropriate for high-traffic volumes or high-speed roads, this “green” technology is especially useful for parking lots, pull-offs, sidewalks, center islands, and walking or biking trails where heavy loads are not expected.

Maintenance of pervious pavement is an important component of its durability and benefits. Debris and sediment may lodge in the pavement pores and significantly slow water drainage. On an annual basis, pressure washing or vacuuming the surface ensures permeability. Regular inspection and permeability testing are also recommended.

Through the STIC, PennDOT updated Publications 23, 242, 408 and 584, which paved the way for this application to be used statewide.

Pennsylvania has seen pervious pavement projects since 2011. Projects included one in Fairmount Park in Philadelphia, near the Delaware Canal in Bucks County, the Hellerstown Streetscape in Northampton County, the Uwchlan Township Trail in Chester County, a parking lot at the Benjamin Rush State Park in Philadelphia, the K & T trail in Philadelphia, the East Coast Greenway in Delaware County, the Fort Hunter Connector project on The Capital Area Greenbelt in Harrisburg, and a parking lot and trail section in Ohiopyle State Park in Fayette County. Pervious pavement projects have been completed and are ongoing for the Paoli Pike Trail in Chester County.

Adding pervious pavement to a section of the Schuylkill River Trail in Chester County is slated for next year.

Among the local pervious pavement projects is the construction planned for this year of 3,500 linear feet of multi-use trail within a community park in Lower Makefield Township, Bucks County. The project includes the conversion of 500 linear feet of the existing trail and 24 parking spaces to pervious pavement. The municipality also maintains a pervious pavement surface adjacent to the park.

Why are pervious pavements an important tool? Preventing excessive stormwater runoff helps replenish groundwater, which accounts for 56 percent of Pennsylvania’s water supply, especially in rural areas of the state. Every acre of land that is covered with an impervious surface generates 27,000 gallons of surface runoff instead of groundwater recharge during a one-inch rainstorm.

For more information, visit the Pervious Pavement page on the STIC website at: https://tinyurl.com/ygm6stw7.
PHILADELPHIA AREA STUDENTS LENDING THEIR HEARTS TO TRANSPORTATION SAFETY

By Robyn Briggs, Community Relations Coordinator, District 6

Philadelphia area students were invited to help save lives and keep pedestrians, motorists, PennDOT workers, and bicyclists safe through District 6’s newly created Helping Hearts Transportation Safety campaign for Valentine’s Day.

Since many PennDOT programs were put on hold because of Covid-19, District 6 wanted to find a way to reach students through a virtual platform and continue educating the public on transportation safety hazards. Students were asked to submit a drawing and create a valentine which highlighted a traffic safety theme such as, distracted driving, impaired driving, speeding, seatbelt usage, bicycle safety, pedestrian safety and school bus safety.

District 6 students sent in inspiring artwork to help promote these important transportation safety messages. Drawings were posted on the Philadelphia Area 511PA Twitter and on the Greater Philly Area Facebook page.

It's always special to receive a valentine, but even more special to receive a valentine that cares about the traveling public’s wellbeing.

The image shows some of the creative drawings we received from students.
Every year, in preparation for winter weather, Lawrence County maintenance crews used to use a fork lift to attach salt spreading devices onto the back of trucks while someone crawled underneath to finish making the connections.

With just one forklift for all of Lawrence County, it was long and slow process.

And, to John Olszewski, known in the district as "Johnny O," the county's Highway Equipment Manager, it just didn't seem very safe.

About two years ago, Olszewski came up with a better idea – one that would be safer for employees and speed up the process, making it easier for everyone.

His idea had specific requirements.

"I wanted to have some way of having one or two workers mounting the spreader while the forklift was going to get the next spreader," Olszewski said. "I wanted it on wheels, so it was easy to move around, and it had to be adjustable, each side independent of the other side."

Olszewski also wanted it to be used by the garage staff when working on the spreaders. "It had to be an open concept so one would be able to fix hydraulic lines or motors and replace augers and bearings," he said.

Having grown up working around machinery in the family business, Olszewski said he knew exactly what he wanted and talked to the shop's welder about building the specialized cart.

With Olszewski's creation, the spreader is placed on the 8-by-2-foot cart and rolled up to the truck. But, before it's lined up, the hydraulic line is connected.

"This way you are able to see better, and you are not under the forks of the forklift that is usually holding the spreader," Olszewski said.

Once the lines are attached, the spreader can be lined up to the truck and dropped into place. After the support brackets are connected on either side, the cart is lowered and removed.

To remove the spreader, the process is simply reversed.

"If the spreader has to come off for some reason during the winter it can be done easy and safely," Olszewski said. "In previous years, the operator would have to bring the truck to the main yard to remove the spreader causing a delay."

Now, he added, every stockpile in the county has a cart.

"When I first came up with the idea, I did let the district equipment manager and my county manager know. They liked the idea and the fact that it would be safer than using a forklift," Olszewski said. "Now, we have one for every stockpile in the county."

District 11 shared this smart practice through PennDOT WorkSmart, an online system, accessible 24/7, that provides all PennDOT employees with a forum to share their smart practices, or things they are already doing as part of their normal work day, with their fellow PennDOT employees.
AUTOMATED FLAGGING ASSIST DEVICE: ASSISTING WORK FORCE AND IMPROVING SAFETY
By Steve Cowan, Deputy Communications Director, District 11

During the 2020 Summer Operations season, Allegheny County had the opportunity to use an Automated Flagging Assist Device (AFAD) utilizing their rental contract. The units have a solar battery and only need plugged in occasionally. They also can be towed in tandem or singularly to the jobsite.

"The set up process does take a little getting used to and requires the crew to act as a team during set up, but once in place it's simple from there," said Curtis Peters, the assistant county maintenance manager in charge of Allegheny County's drainage crew.

Both units for the device are controlled by one flagger using a small handheld remote control. The operator of the AFAD stands somewhere in the middle of the jobsite, but off the road and out of harm's way.

"From my perspective, the biggest benefit of utilizing this device is increased safety. It allows the removal of two flaggers from a dangerous job and replaces them with just one crew member that can be in a safer location. On top of that, these devices come with an intrusion alarm, so if a vehicle from the opposite direction crosses into the work zone the alarm will sound to alert the crew," Peters added.

Another benefit of only needing one flagger is adding a crew member to the workforce that was previously flagging traffic all day long. The operator of the device also gets the benefit of having the ability to move around (within reason) as opposed to the traditional flagger station where not much movement is possible.

Last season, the device was primarily used by Allegheny County's drainage crew, but a general maintenance crew in the county's Findlay Section also had the opportunity to use it. The county estimates the device gave them an approximate cost avoidance of $2,100 per week because they did not have to utilize their flagger contract to supplement their operations. This amounted to about $44,000 in total cost avoidance for the 2020 season, which is on the conservative end. The county plans to continue the use of the device for the 2021 summer season.

LIQUID FUELS DISTRIBUTION TO MUNICIPALITIES FOR LOCAL ROADS AND BRIDGES

PennDOT has committed $452.7 million in liquid fuels payments to help certified municipalities maintain their roads and bridges.

This year's allocation is approximately 7 percent less than last year's, due to reduced gas tax revenues as a result of COVID-19.

PennDOT's annual distributions assist with municipalities' highway and bridge-related expenses such as snow removal and road repaving. There are 120,596 miles of public roads in Pennsylvania. There are 73,091 miles owned by municipalities and eligible for liquid fuels. The formula for payments is based on a municipality's population and miles of locally-owned roads.

Act 89 of 2013 made more funding available for locally owned roadways. Before the law, municipalities received $320.8 million in liquid fuels payments.

To be eligible for liquid fuels, a roadway must be formally adopted as a public street by the municipality, meet certain dimension requirements, and be able to safely accommodate vehicles driving at least 15 mph.

For the complete list of local payments, visit the "Municipal Liquid Fuels Program" page at www.penndot.gov under the "Doing Business" Local Government page.
A visionary leader supported by savvy executives intent on overcoming bureaucratic obstacles paved the way for PennDOT’s innovative Agility program, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2021.

In 1995, then-PennDOT Secretary Brad Mallory came across a book by author Roger Nagle, “Agile Competitors and Virtual Organizations,” outlining a concept to spur businesses to think outside of the box. On Sept. 29, 1995, Nagle and associates from Lehigh University met with Secretary Mallory and they later reconvened at Lehigh along with Deputy Secretary for Highways Mike Ryan, District Executive Walter Bortree from PennDOT’s Lehigh Valley region and Center for Performance Excellence staffer Joe Robinson. Nagle briefed the PennDOT team on his Agility concept.

"On a superficial level, I was struck by the term initially," Mallory said. "That was a good thing to be as I thought about it. It occurred to me the notion was akin to a competitive organization declaring a Christmas truce from the normal trench warfare. Join forces and cooperate to release the life of the joint enterprise to a higher level and produce higher productivity."

"If there ever was an enterprise that needed that, it was government," Mallory added.

Mallory’s initial thought was to join with academia, but a mentor, former PennDOT Secretary Tom Larson, who had engineered a dramatic turnaround at PennDOT under Gov. Dick Thornburgh, advised against it.

Mallory then turned to his deputy secretaries and for Christmas 1995, bought them each a copy of Nagle’s book and asked them to come back to him with ideas on how to bring the Agility approach to PennDOT.

"Rob Wonderling (then PennDOT Deputy Secretary for Administration) came back with a program layout to reach out to local governments and trade services with them," Mallory said. "Instead of stopping the plows at the borough line, we should continue with a straight pass and they do a similar loop and hit some of our network." By enabling PennDOT and partners to equally exchange services, like snow plowing or mowing, without exchanging money, synergies could be found to better transportation in Pennsylvania.

"It was mundane kinds of things," Mallory added. Plus, he noted, it would address the challenging impact of the jurisdictional boundaries created by Pennsylvania’s myriad of local governments with road responsibilities.

Reflecting his often-stated mantra when he headed PennDOT, Mallory said, "People don’t care who owns the road, they want seamless service and that (Agility) really played to that.

"When he (Rob) suggested that, I got excited about it," Mallory said. "Rob could take input and turn it into something that turned out to be quite valuable."

Wonderling, now president and CEO of The Chamber of Commerce for Greater Philadelphia, said he had absorbed the lessons Mallory had conveyed to his team about how far PennDOT had come under Governors Dick Thornburgh and Bob Casey and their Secretaries Larson and Howard Yerusalim.

"I was very committed to understanding the history and legacy of the Department, which Brad had articulated so well since he had lived through it," Wonderling said.

"Early in our term, he had told the story how PennDOT fiscally, morally and legislatively was bankrupt," Wonderling said. "It came out of the ashes through the Larson era where Brad had..."
cut his teeth with the Department. Governor Casey and Secretary Yerusalim had continued the innovations ... Because of my young age (barely 30) and wanting to succeed and carry that forward professionally and personally, my incentive was to do that and help serve in a collaborative way."

At that time, in 1995, there was no established internet, the information and technology revolution involving computers was picking up steam and economic globalization was increasing. It simply was a time ripe for new ideas such as Agility.

"The notion of collaboration through innovation really captured my imagination," Wonderling said. "It felt like a really good frame to continue that legacy of Larson and Yerusalim and Thornburgh and Casey for PennDOT to innovate.

Wonderling credited Rich Harris, head of PennDOT’s Center for Performance Excellence, precursor to the current Bureau of Innovations.

Calling him his "Yoda," a reference to the Star Wars sage-like character, Wonderling said he spent hours with Harris mapping out the Agility concept.

"He had an unparalleled wisdom and understanding of PennDOT," Wonderling said of Harris. "He was in the Air Force and saw how to move from vision to the practical. He was a very wily guy."

They focused on the highway maintenance organization as the best place to incorporate Agility’s principles. At the time, PennDOT management was working on a new master labor agreement with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), which represents the Department’s frontline workers.

"We saw an opportunity to make AFSCME equal partners through Agility, to earn credibility with the union," Wonderling said.

One key to success was to ensure Agility had a very public face and efforts to streamline maintenance efforts would be highly visible.

"We always heard from Brad that the yellow maintenance truck was the most visible symbol of PennDOT," Wonderling said.

A driving concept was to keep it simple and "we saw building relationships with municipal government on maintenance made the most sense. People just want a smooth ride," he added.

On March 27, 1996, during his quarterly initiative meeting with Mallory, Wonderling outlined the Agility program.

"It went from a concept somebody had told me in a meeting at Lehigh and six months later, Rob had put pen to paper and laid out the bare bones of the initiative," Mallory said.

On May 30, Wonderling, Harris and Sherri Chippo, Wonderling’s special assistant whom he later made project manager, met with Mallory and the Agility program was launched.

Dr. Chippo, now Assistant Professor/Managing Director for the Administration & Leadership Studies Research & Training Center (ALS-RTC) at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, said the principles for Agility were written to help businesses become more agile. During Gov. Tom Ridge’s administration, "We were looking at best practices in business that we could bring them to government," she said.

"The Ridge administration was very receptive to it. We had begun looking at government as a business, adapting practices to help improve performance and service delivery. Our leadership was ripe for taking this on," she added.

In November 1996, Mallory and Wonderling held a series of meetings with the House and Senate Transportation chairs to explain the program.

Dr. Chippo said the biggest challenge of all was dealing with an undercurrent in the organization that believed this was just another new program that would eventually go away if you just wait it out.

"There was superficial support in a lot of places in the organization. They would give it 'token' support without any intention of really giving it a try," she said. "But counter to that, there was a lot of support from people who liked the idea and that was what eventually won out."

Mallory said many critics thought the local partners would not be able to offer anything of equal value, and that PennDOT would be contributing more than it was receiving.

"It was our money and not the people's money and that was the flaw in the opponents' thinking," Mallory said. "But the real goal is to make life better for people. The public relations benefits of this were enormous. It was anti-bureaucratic in the extreme and people loved it. Rules and regulations be damned. It was about how to do something that makes sense, common sense, but do it in a fashion that is still legal."

Initially, the Office of Chief Counsel felt the risks were such that they were very uncomfortable with the concept of a written handshake between partners that the agility concept called for, Dr. Chippo said.

"We had a lot of back and forth with Legal to get them comfortable with it," Mallory said.

First drafts of proposed Agility legal agreements were 30 pages long, Mallory noted. "But we ended up with a couple of paragraphs for the agreements. That had to happen to make it work."
Wonderling noted that Agility really was simple.

"It was a bartering arrangement," he said. "You've got this, we got that. You do this and we do that. That is what got us going."

Critical to Agility's success was PennDOT's insistence that the value of the services was carefully calculated to ensure equitable sharing for all parties.

"But we came up with a new agility agreement that really was different. It was much simpler, more of a 'written handshake,' and helped to break down the initial bureaucratic resistance that we can't do this," Dr. Chippo said. "We made it a much less intimidating process for our partners." This form followed by a work plan has led to over 3,200 agreements in 25 years.

She noted that sharing credit for Agility's success was crucial.

"One of the most effective tools for winning support was giving people credit for their role, regardless of how big or small and despite the fact that they may have been reluctant about it to begin with. This 'sharing of credit' included Department managers, employees, local governments, local elected officials, AFSCME, and others. It brought them out of the dark and into the light, gave them 'ownership' in the project, and they began to believe in it. This growing support broke through a lot of resistance and helped others implement their ideas and gave them credit for helping bring things along. More and more people started to work hard for it, coming up with more and more ideas on how to adapt and make it better.

"There were so many pieces that made it work ... getting out there and celebrating new Agility agreements ... turning over the 'keys' for the maintenance organization to our employees ... bringing union leaders to the table and helping them realize a sense of ownership." Dr. Chippo said. "This was Rob's 'multi-pronged approach' as he often called it. It was brilliant! It really worked and was very exciting to watch as it unfolded."

Mallory noted that several years later, after Agility success was apparent, "I made an observation: 'I must have been crazy to take this on.'

"We were up to our necks in alligators, dealing with the need for a new building. (The Transportation and Safety Building, PennDOT's headquarters, had been hit with a disastrous fire.) We were in a condemned building and we were a new administration.

"We were launching a host of new initiatives. In retrospect, it strikes me it was almost irresponsible to take on such a new challenge, but we did it," he said.

Dr. Chippo said it is wonderful to see Agility celebrating 25 years.

Wonderling said the ongoing success of Agility "is testimony to the employees at PennDOT, who always had a strong sense they were stewards of tax dollars. They have a deep-rooted sense they are doing important work to save lives and improve the health and welfare of our communities."

Mallory recalled a lesson he had learned from legendary District Executive Paul E. Heise, P.E., in District 3, based in Montoursville, Lycoming County.

"When he was assistant District Executive for Maintenance, he told me he learned that ramping up good maintenance practices is infectious. When we take better care of our roads, the locals start to take better care and people start taking better care of their properties adjacent to our roads. I thought that was a bit much.

"Over the next several years, I began to realize the quality of the highways was improving and local roads were getting better and houses along Route 87 (in District 3) were getting better. He (Paul) clearly saw it and it was true."

And Agility helps further that effort.

"It was too good to believe, but it was true and what a benefit it is to society at large and in Pennsylvania," Mallory concluded.

FREE SUBSIDIZED PUBLIC TRANSIT OFFERED FOR VACCINE APPOINTMENTS

As COVID-19 vaccines became more available and as counties prepared to open mass vaccination sites, public transit, often free or subsidized, was available in every county to ensure that our most vulnerable citizens could get vaccinated.

Shared ride programs are available in every county and fixed-route transportation systems statewide offer accessible transportation. The commonwealth provides both Lottery and Act 44 funds to subsidize those trips for seniors and individuals with disabilities every day. Trips include those to mass vaccination sites and any site where a vaccine is available to individuals, including pharmacies, hospitals and doctor's offices. Free transportation to vaccinations was made available at the time in at least 39 counties for qualifying individuals.

The Senior Shared Ride program enables all individuals age 65 and older to use shared-ride, curb-to-curb services and pay only a small portion of the regular shared-ride fare. Individuals with disabilities ages 18-64 may access transportation through the Persons with Disabilities Program.
This spring PennDOT announced the start of a Workforce Development Pilot program in partnership with rabbitransit, Chester County Transportation Management Association (TMACC), and Urban Outfitters.

The Workforce Development Pilot program was designed to provide public transportation services to connect jobseekers with employment opportunities that were previously unreachable due to a lack of transportation options.

The pilot program was launched in two corridors in Pennsylvania: Gettysburg to Hanover and Coatesville to Gap. The pilot will run for up to 24 months to determine local transportation needs and future feasibility. Participating employers have agreed to pay a portion of the costs of public transportation while aligning shift schedules to maximize the number of riders that can use the service.

Rabbitransit is partnering with the Adams County Community Foundation to provide new transit service in central Pennsylvania. This portion of the pilot seeks to connect Gettysburg area residents to businesses in Hanover, including Pella Windows and Doors, Yazoo Mills, Winter Gardens, Packaging Corporation of America, Cross Keys Village – the Brethren Home Community, Adams County Rescue Mission, and Adams County Prison.
At PennDOT, we’re always looking for innovative solutions to improve transportation across the state. Despite this forward-thinking mindset, we realize that looking at the past can sometimes inform solutions to modern challenges.

As part of Act 120, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) was created on July 1, 1970. To honor PennDOT’s 50-year anniversary, we created a timeline of events to highlight some of our most important milestones over the years.

From the early 1900’s through 2020, Pennsylvania’s transportation industry has gone through changes that influence how we do business today.

Did you know that the Rural Roads Program of the 1930’s had a significant impact on Pennsylvania’s economy? Or that our Medical Re-Examination Program for drivers 45 and older began in 1960?

In more recent history, public transportation in Pennsylvania received its own dedicated funding source in 2007. Our state’s first Active Transportation Plan was completed just last year, outlining a vision and framework for improving conditions for walking and bicycling across Pennsylvania.

See the full timeline at PennDOT.gov/50years to learn more about our history. We’ll be adding future milestones to our website as we continue to improve Pennsylvania’s transportation operations in the coming years.

When Rich Kirkpatrick retired from PennDOT, he said he felt like a “dinosaur.” I had to pause when he said that. Rich is a wealth of information. He was head of the Harrisburg Associated Press office for 16 years and worked for AP in Philadelphia and Harrisburg for a total of just over 24 years, and then 22 years at PennDOT. He served as PennDOT’s Director of Communications for the past four years and previously served as Press Secretary between 1996 and 2011 and again between 2013 until being named Communications Director in 2015. Between 2011 and 2013, he was Driver Safety Manager in the Bureau of Driver Licensing.

A dinosaur. That word hung in the air as I thought about how much change in communication methods he has witnessed during his career.

Rich went on to explain when he started writing in high school, he had taken a class in smoke signals. I’m just kidding, of course, but that is how he makes it seem as he begins to unravel his tale of his life as a reporter. He had used a typewriter and would hand write edits on the paper. Retype the final draft. This went on throughout college. I neglected to ask him if it was a manual or electric typewriter.

Aftet college, he took a job at The Grit, the national small-town weekly newspaper based in Williamsport, where they used a hot lead press or typesetting. In printing or typography, it is also called mechanical typesetting. This sounded as if it was a step up from the Gutenberg Press. This method injects molten type metal into a mold that has the shape of one or more glyphs. The resulting slugs, usually letters or symbols, are then used to press ink onto the paper. This technology reduced labor since the type sorts did not need to be slotted into position manually and cast crisp new type for each printing job.

Then he described the Linotype machines. These machines would set up one line at a time (think “line o’type”) which was useful for rapid newspaper printing. It was the standard technology used for mass-market printing.

When Rich went to work at the AP in the 70’s, he used a tape system to get the news from the typewriter into a rudimentary computer system. He described it differently than what I recall from old Westerns, when the puny guy tapped out a Morse code message. His written copy would be "punched" or typed into a machine that produced a ticker tape in a code. The tape would be fed into a computer and would store the stories for transmissions to the newspapers and broadcast stations. The stories would print out in large,

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noisy, teletype machines at 66 words per minute. The AP had a variety of services, with larger newspapers and broadcast stations having separate circuits for national, state and sports stories with smaller papers taking all those news categories on one circuit. Editors at the smaller newspapers would often call the AP staff to complain that the specific story they needed was jammed up behind too many other stories they didn’t need right away, so it was a constant juggling act to get everybody what they wanted to meet their deadlines.

When Rich moved to Harrisburg, while working for the AP, each evening he had to fax to Philadelphia all the stories the staff produced by the end of the day for the next day’s afternoon newspapers. Again, this process consumed a lot of his time. This was the 1970s. Later, the bureaus had CRTs on which to write their stories (for all the geeks out there, translation: Cathode-ray tube). This type of monitor uses streams of electrons that activate dots or pixels on the screen to create a full image. Remember those big, heavy, deep monitors, usually glowed green font?

During this time, wire service reporters covering stories in the field used pay phones. Cell phones were not invented yet. When a story broke, they had to make sure they knew where the pay phone was and beat the competing reporters to the phone to call in the story. Losing the play, meaning having the competitor’s story make it into print instead of yours, could break your career. Sometimes, in anticipation of a big story breaking, some reporters would unscrew the mouthpiece and carry it with them to reserve a pay phone!

Next came the TRS-80 from Radio Shack, a.k.a. Trash-80. I had to Google this portable PC because I had not heard of it before. It would send three lines at a time and Rich said he would watch each one of his stories closely to make certain they went through. "Because if the cursor went backwards," Rich said, "that indicated a bad phone connection, and you would have to start all over again and resend it."

In 1982, right after Rich got his AP TRS-80, he arrived home one evening just moments after a small plane had crashed into a house three doors down from where he lived! He raced to the end of his street to see what had happened. He talked to people milling in the street, then from home, typed up his story into the TRS-80 and transmitted it via a so-called acoustic connection via phone to the Philadelphia bureau. This connection involved placing the phone handset into two rubber cups connected to the TRS-80. The story was thus quickly transmitted to the rest of the state and nation.

"In those days, it was the 'Marines of Journalism', " said Rich. "You had to be fast and accurate."

The transfer of paper to electronics happened over a span of 20 years, 1960-1980’s. The 1990’s seemed to be dedicated to the Internet. "The Internet changed everyone’s role," Rich said. "It turned everyone into a wire reporter."

People went to websites for their information. People looked constantly on the web and deadlines became every minute instead of twice a day. Twitter arrived with 140 characters and this challenge has left audiences with smaller attention spans.

"We don't have the luxury to explain in depth messages," Rich said.

Rich Kirkpatrick has led such a full life as a writer and reporter and member of the PennDOT communications team. Before Rich retired, Steve Chizmar, head of the Bureau of Innovations and former PennDOT Press Secretary, asked Rich to return as an annuitant. Rich continued writing stories for PennDOT. He can add another piece to the constantly changing communications arena and that is teleworking. Since the COVID-19, Rich has kept in contact electronically.

"This opportunity has allowed me to stay in touch with the wonderful people committed to delivering the very best transportation services in the most effective and efficient way possible in the face of an incredibly daunting revenue environment. What an honor to still be involved in that mission," Rich said.

This didn't sound like a dinosaur talking.
June 17, 1966 was the first day of Bernard McGowen’s longtime career with PennDOT. He started as summer help between college years, then decided to stick around for a while – more than 5 decades to be exact.

Bernard B. McGowen is a Transportation Construction Manager in PennDOT’s District 6, based in the greater Philadelphia area.

"My title is Transportation Construction Manager 3. Currently, I am managing the new ADA ramp projects within District 6," McGowen said. "Plus, I manage the federal assistance to municipality projects within the City of Philadelphia."

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation was created in 1970. Starting his career in 1966 with the PA Department of Highways, McGowen has been with us since the very beginning. So, why did he stay all these years?

"It was interesting work," he said. "It always kept me interested and put food on the table, so I stayed."

Over the years, McGowen has worked primarily in construction, but he was also on a maintenance crew for 3 years as an assistant county manager. Additionally, he worked in municipal services, starting in Chester County and ending in Bucks County.

His current position is the one he’s enjoyed most, noting that most of his career in the construction unit has been leading up to this.

Over the years, McGowen has witnessed many changes at PennDOT. Going from paper to computer is one of the most obvious ways PennDOT’s operations has changed, and he also noted that he’s progressively gained more responsibility over the years while climbing his way up the ladder.

"Outside of that, it’s pretty much the same," he added. "The details change, but the programs and overall way you work have not changed very much."

McGowen enjoys having new things to do every day – new projects to take on and new responsibilities to manage.

His most memorable project was on Route 536 around Lake Nockamixon in Bucks County. The working conditions were unique compared to other projects he was involved with. The outside work was the same as any other place, but working in this specific location had perks.

"As our field office, we had a house which is now the Park Visitor Center," he reminisced. "In the wintertime, we had free firewood from the park, and we had the fire roaring all the time, and we had a kitchen there to make coffee or whatever."

McGowen mentioned that he’s well beyond retirement age at this point, but he’s still with PennDOT because he’s having fun! When he retires, he’ll miss being busy and having technical challenges to deal with.

As someone with nearly 55 years of experience with the department, McGowen is in a unique position to offer his perspective on PennDOT’s future.

"I’d like to see the young engineers look to and learn from the past and stop trying to reinvent the wheel," he said. "I think there are a lot of old processes that worked very well, sometimes better than what we’re doing now, and we’ve discarded them because they’re old."

While McGowen can appreciate innovation and improvement in the construction industry, he’s urging future generations to recognize that “new” doesn’t always mean “better.” As an example, he noted that some old materials have stood the test of time better than newer materials.

Whenever Bernard McGowen decides to hang up his hard hat and retire, his expertise and wealth of knowledge will be sorely missed. He concluded his interview with a note to the public about PennDOT workers:

"Majority of people are here to do a good job and they’re serious about their work. They care about their job and they want to make roads and bridges that last – it’s not a boondoggle for them."
Richard Burns is a Senior Civil Engineer Supervisor in PennDOT’s District 6. He’s been with PennDOT since June 1969.

As part of PennDOT’s 50-year anniversary, we conducted an interview with Burns about his experience over the past 50+ years.

Why did you come to work for PennDOT?
I worked one summer while in Temple University and the following year, I was offered an engineering technician position.

How many years at PennDOT?
52 years.

What positions have you had with PennDOT?
I was an Engineering Technician for one year, then a Construction Inspector for 2 or 3 years. I became a Philadelphia Assistant County Manager in maintenance, and then transferred back to Civil Engineer Supervisor title.

Why did you stay at PennDOT?
I enjoyed what I was doing, enjoyed highways and bridge work, and enjoyed working with a good group of people.

What has changed the most about your job during your time at PennDOT?
It’s amazing how much technology and materials have changed to how we do it now. Changes in materials used on roadways and improved means and methods.

What do you wish the general public knew about PennDOT?
Overall, the employees in the construction end of maintenance do care about their jobs and do their best to build and maintain our roads.

What did you find most rewarding working here?
In 1986 or 1987, we had a large snowstorm. It was 20-something inches over Valentines weekend. It was a tough job and an experience I will never forget. I remember working Friday on I-95 straight through Sunday early morning.

What was your most exciting or memorable day working for PennDOT?
That snowstorm. Looking back on it now, it was not a fun time. It was a tough 2 ½ days. I learned to appreciate the guys who do snow removal. I wouldn’t wish that on their worst enemy.

What will you miss most about working at PennDOT or working with the employees at PennDOT?
I’ll miss the comradery with my fellow employees. I have been blessed to always work with good group of people.

What do you hope for the future of PennDOT?
I hope they stay focused and stay on their mission.

"I enjoyed this career and worked with a pretty good bunch of people," Burns said. "A lot of people should consider working here for the opportunity."
In 2021, Donate Life had a very special and very personal connection to two PennDOT employees who were willing to share their stories. One will be a living organ donor for a friend and the other is a recent organ donor recipient—helped in his journey by the kindness of family and total strangers.

Meet Tara, a Living Donor

District 9 Community Relations Coordinator Tara Callahan-Henry will be a living donor when she helps her long-time friend Kelly McCabe by donating a kidney. Tara and Kelly have been friends since 1995 when they were roommates at Coastal Carolina University.

Kelly lives in South Carolina and the transplant will take place at Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC).

Kelly recently went through training to receive dialysis at home. She will continue with dialysis until her surgery, which was recently delayed for the second time due to issues in the cross match of blood. With surgery delayed, being able to stay home for dialysis makes things easier for Kelly.

A living donor transplant is a 5-step process. The steps include:

- Referral
- Evaluation
- Homework, such as testing, gathering records and blood work
- Selection
- Surgery

The surgery has a low rate of complications. On average, 85% of patients discharged within 3 days, followed by 7 days of close follow-up.

In Tara and Kelly's situation, the living donor transplant is a non-direct donation. Once the surgery gets rescheduled, there may be two, three, or four sets of donors and recipients — and all the surgeries will occur on the same day. Tara will be a match for one of the other recipients, while Kelly will be a match with one of the other donors. The donor and recipient in each match can meet after the transplant if they wish to do so.

Because Kelly has had issues with the cross match of blood, the next time MUSC finds a match for Kelly things will move very quickly to ensure that the cross match of blood does not have time to fail prior to surgery.

Once Tara is notified of the rescheduled surgery, she’ll report for COVID testing and final bloodwork. After that, she'll have to be in South Carolina for at least a week after the transplant.

Meet Justin, a Transplant Recipient

On the flip side of the transplant situation is Justin Bowser, a Transportation Construction Inspector in PennDOT’s District 9. Justin has been dealing with diabetes since age 13. A consequence of that has been diabetic kidney disease, which led to eventual kidney failure.

Justin started on home dialysis in September of 2020 and had been awaiting a kidney transplant through University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC). Being able to perform the dialysis at home allowed Justin to continue working.

Although expecting to go through the transplant surgery sometime before the end of 2021, circumstances moved more quickly, and Justin was notified in early March that UPMC had his match set up and surgery was scheduled for mid-March.

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Justin reported to Montefiore Hospital in Pittsburgh on March 18 for the transplant. Things went smoothly and he was discharged to his parent’s home on March 21.

Staying with his folks gives him a good support system since he was initially in some pain and could not lift more than 5 pounds—increased to 10 pounds. Justin will stay with his parents for 6-8 weeks post-surgery.

Another aspect to Justin’s surgery has been the immunosuppressant drugs he needs to take to helped ward off his body rejecting the kidney. For 90 days post-surgery, Justin needs to stay away from public exposure as much as possible, which will extend his recovery time.

Justin is close with his brother Joey, who will be a donor in the same kind of scenario as Tara & Kelly. Justin has noted that he feels quite fortunate—there were many people willing to donate—a real testament to the naturally positive, cheerful person Justin is.

Unlike Tara & Kelly’s situation, the surgeries associated with Justin’s plan will take place on different days. Joey’s surgery is scheduled for later in April. The woman who donated to Justin has a niece who will receive a new kidney from a different donor.

Now that his transplant has taken place, Justin feels better in general, although he has noted that it takes time for your body to adjust and get used to its “new normal.” Luckily, he feels a little bit better every day. A great benefit to his new normal is that home dialysis is now a thing of the past. He’s also adjusting to having people around 24/7 since he’s lived alone for the past six years—but he’s thrilled to have his family’s support and they are thrilled to see his health improving.

Transplant is important. Studies show that individuals receiving a new kidney do better than those on dialysis. Patients who have been living with a transplanted kidney for 10 years demonstrate a greater likelihood of still being alive than those on dialysis. For every 10 patients receiving a new kidney, eight will still have that kidney working three years after the operation.

According to the UPMC website, every moment is critical for the more than 96,000 Americans on the kidney transplant waiting list.

During a living-donor kidney transplant, a healthy kidney from a living person is removed and transplanted into a person with a failing kidney. Benefits of a living-donor kidney transplant include:

**Little or no wait time.** Patients can receive the transplant sooner and schedule the surgery at a time that’s convenient for both the donor and the recipient.

**Quicker recovery time.** Both recipients and donors often return to their normal, active lives within weeks to months following living donor transplant surgery because of new minimally invasive surgery procedures.

**Improved long-term outcomes.** Living donor transplant reduces the risk of rejection because the kidney is functioning up until the time of surgery.

A healthy donor must:

- Be between the ages of 18 and 75
- Have an adequate support system and financial resources

Be in good general health and have no history of:

- Heart disease
- Liver disease, including cirrhosis and hepatitis B and C
- Diabetes
- HIV
- Other diseases that could complicate the surgery

Even though we celebrate April as Donate Life month, take a moment to consider how you could make an impact in someone else’s life. If contributing as a living donor isn’t possible, please remember that you can easily specify organ donation on your PA driver’s license.

To become a donor, you can quickly and easily sign up online or check "yes" for organ and tissue donation when you get or renew your driver’s license, learner’s permit or photo ID. The words "Organ Donor" will be placed below your photo and in your computer record with the Pa. Department of Transportation. Make sure to share your decision with your loved ones. **There is no fee to sign up to be a donor.**
In April 2021 there were 43 highway, bridge, rail, and bike and pedestrian projects in 21 counties selected for $45.9 million in funding through the Multimodal Transportation Fund.

Reflecting PennDOT’s commitment to improving local infrastructure, several of the projects will also help local governments improve roadways, address pedestrian and accessibility concerns, and help bridges in need of repair or replacement.

PennDOT evaluated the applications and made selections based on criteria such as safety benefits, regional economic conditions, the technical and financial feasibility, job creation, energy efficiency, and operational sustainability.

The next round of Multimodal grant applications will open in September 2021. For more information about the program, visit www.penndot.gov and click on "Multimodal Program" under the "Projects & Programs" button.
Investments in multimodal projects assist with overall mobility and safety in our local communities. Many of these projects reflect PennDOT’s commitment to improving local infrastructure, and helping local governments improve roadways, address pedestrian and accessibility concerns, as well as help bridges in need of repair or replacement.

Additional improvements include: stormwater management streetscape, access new or improved bike lanes, ways to alleviate congestion, an at-grade rail crossing, and various traffic control enhancements and more.
George W. McAuley Jr., P.E.
Executive Deputy Secretary

In Memoriam: 1962-2021
PennDOT mourned the passing of Executive Deputy Secretary George McAuley in February 2021. Through more than 33 years of service to this department at many levels of the organization, George had a significant impact on all of us and the people of Pennsylvania. He was passionate about our mission, innovation, and about setting us on a positive course during these challenging times with an eye on the future.

Timothy (Tim) Fitch
Transportation Equipment Operator Specialist

Timothy (Tim) Fitch from Elk County was the 90th PennDOT employee lost on the job since 1970. We continue to honor fallen team members on our Worker Memorials page:  www.penndot.gov/memorial.