

October 16, 1995

Honorable Robert Q. Flick  
Member, House of Representatives  
229 West Lancaster Avenue  
Devon, Pa. 19333

Re: Road Construction  
PENNDOT  
Routes # 30 and # 320  
Villanova PA

Dear Bob,

As you may already know, I own several small retail buildings on Lancaster Avenue in Villanova. The purpose of this letter is to advise you of the recent road construction history as it applies to this location, and the negative financial impact on local merchants. Furthermore, a fear exists that the future Villanova University underpass project, will likewise create more financial burden on business, over the next two years.

This history includes the Amtrack railroad bridge project on Route # 320 started June 1991, the current work, and the Villanova University underpass scheduled to begin Spring of 1996 forecasted to last into 1998.

Enclosed for your convenience are copies of articles well documenting the specifics including:

- A) Suburban & Wayne Times, Feb 2 1995, by Helen Cooper.
- B) Suburban & Wayne Times, January 1995, letter to the editor from MARK KEENAN.
- C) PENNDOT News release, May 5, 1995.

While attending several subject public meetings, I have proposed the following recommendations.

- Incorporate enforceable incentives and penalties in performance contracts as do other states.
- Determine economic impact on local merchants. Where failure to perform exists by

contractor, penalties collected should be distributed to financially injured merchants when applicable.

- Create a "WATCHDOG" committee comprised of local merchants, residents, PENNDOT, contractor, and politicians; to monitor and communicate progress, as well as problems and solutions.

- PENNDOT should establish computerized project plan with critical path scheduling to track and report to committee.

My observations conclude that local merchants feel PENNDOT lost control of project and PRIMO CONSTRUCTION CO., INC. (Some wonder who was running the asylum.) when questioned about delays, contractor along with some PENNDOT employees used excuses. Progress was continually delayed over project duration. A totally abominable performance.

Finally, why was PRIMO CONSTRUCTION CO., INC. which has a record of missed deadlines, awarded other contracts? (Cited in January 1995 letter of M. KEENAN) Will the state continue to reward failure?

Low contract bidders don't always guarantee lowest final cost! When businesses are forced to slow down or close and commerce stops, the state likewise loses sales and income taxes as well as community good will.

Let us all become winners by adopting a "can do" attitude and get future projects completed on time by using competent contractors.

Very truly yours,  
Ed Siberie

364 YORKSHIRE RD  
ROSEMONT, PA 19010

NEWS

# Businesses hurt by construction at Rts. 30 & 320

BY HELEN COOPER  
Staff writer

"Why doesn't PennDOT care about our business?" is the sign in Villanova Hardware's window this week - and owner J. Mark Keenan says it's not coming down, even after several pleas from the project engineer on the construction job.

Loyal customers ask why he didn't print it in larger type. Most come in on weekends when the digging up of Lancaster Ave. in the vicinity of Route 320 isn't going on - if they come in at all. One had a tire slashed by a loose steel plate over an excavation last weekend.

Another had the bad luck not to miss the open trench on Route 320. It took a tow truck to get his car out, and only then, says Keenan, did the contractor's work crews start covering the open trenches that line both sides of the road.

Intersection congestion, one lane open in each direction, debris and gridlock have become the

norm on Route 30. The former Atomic Tire site that's supposed to become a pretty green swale to drain excess water run-off from the area and prevent flooding is still an unimproved eyesore.

Keenan has detailed the woes of Villanova pike-front merchants in a three-page letter to the PennDOT district engineer, although a permanent replacement for Steve Lester has not yet been appointed by the Republican administration in Harrisburg.

But two PennDOT staffers say the merchants have their sympathy. "It's a disaster," assistant press secretary Lois Morasco agreed. She and press secretary Gene Blaum checked their records. Primo Construction got the contract for the drainage installation, curbing and repaving for \$1.7 million, with a start date of January 1994. Because of harsh weather, Primo was given a three-month extension over the original finishing date of December. That brought the end of the job to March.

Then, said Blaum, there was

the problem of one or two old gas tanks underneath Route 320. They turned into seven or eight, some right in the middle of the intersection. These were to be hauled out by Primo crews working from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. by this morning (Thursday).

During the storm sewer excavation, engineers discovered serious flaws in the pike's concrete base, said Blaum. Another add-on, another extension. Even this week a finishing date of July 1995 was listed in PennDOT's traffic bulletin. Now it's September - officially.

Villanova merchants see a long, dry spring and summer again. Some wonder if they'll ever get their customers back - if Primo Construction ever completes the job.

It wouldn't be so bad if the prolonged construction hadn't killed business for the pike-front merchants just west of Villanova University. Business is down for the Villanova Diner, says co-owner John Malts, "because a left turn on 30 is impossible. People aren't coming in."

Pete and Judy Damian of Coastal Stop-N-Shop say it's hurting everybody. Pete estimates pump sales are down 500 gallons a day, and the convenience store is suffering, too. "People are avoiding the area completely because of the way the construction is going. Now we're concerned about spring and summer when they dig up the road completely."

Keenan sums it up in his letter, reprinted here, in part: "The continued construction of the storm sewer system has finally become intolerable and is having a serious effect on our attempts to keep our businesses afloat throughout this ongoing saga ... I would like to recap our trials and tribulations since 1991."

"In June of 1991, the Spring Mill Road bridge was declared structurally unsound and closed by PennDOT. This left only North Khan Ave., a heavily congested road next to Villanova University, as a route customers from the entire north side of the railroad tracks could cross onto Lancaster Ave. Naturally, these people, rather than sit in long traffic jams, opted to seek other stores for the services we had previously provided them ... At that time we had no knowledge when any work to reopen the bridge would take place."

"In July of 1991, a vicious rumor circulated among our stores that Philadelphia Suburban Water Co. would begin roadwork to move all their water mains in anticipation of a storm sewer project that was planned for the road. In August that rumor proved true as the water company arrived and began digging up the road every day for several months."

"During this project, we noticed that the Aldwyn Lane bridge used by the SEPTA P & W line was closed for repairs for one year. Aldwyn Lane was used by many of our customers on the south side of Lancaster Ave. ... Again we bit the bullet and did our best to keep business flowing."

"Several months went by, and we noticed a crew of workers making cuts in the concrete along Lancaster Ave. ... We learned that PECO was planning to replace all their gas mains along Lancaster Ave., Villanova. We watched for months as the dust mounted, the iron plates along the road banged and traffic slowed ...

"Thanksgiving Day of 1993, the Spring Mill Road bridge finally opened up, and we all breathed a sigh of relief."

"About a year went by ... when one day we heard a familiar noise and saw a terrifying sight. The man with the concrete cutter was marching up and down Lancaster Ave. making new cuts and spraying new colors in the street ... I believe it was the fall of 1994 that Primo Construction began working on the road in earnest. The work took place during the day and sometimes at night. Traffic along Lancaster Ave. immediately set-

led into the familiar routine of not moving, and familiar faces in our stores became less and less. It is now January of 1995, and we are all in serious trouble, and we still face Lancaster Ave. being completely dug up and resurfaced during what should be our busiest time of year."

Keenan details his complaints to PennDOT as follows:

- Why couldn't storm sewer construction have gone on while the Spring Mill Road bridge was closed in 1991?
- Despite assurances that the bulk of the construction work would go on at night, crews are working daytime on both east- and westbound lanes, reducing traffic to one lane in each direction. Spring Mill Road is being worked on at the same time, and traffic backs up to County Line Road.
- Why is the contractor not required to hire an off-duty police of-

ficer to expedite traffic flow at one of the busiest intersections in the area? "Flagmen holding a slow and stop sign do not control the flow of traffic, nor are they trained to do so."

- Why is the contractor allowed to leave large portions of Spring Mill Road open on either side without backfilling long trenches?
- Holes along Lancaster Ave. are covered with iron plates ... not welded or patched together.
- "Why was Primo Construction Co. Inc., a company that has a record of missed deadlines, awarded the contract?"

Keenan concludes, "We don't need a meeting with PennDOT ... We need PennDOT officials to take definitive action, and change the daytime construction on the roadway."

Copies have been sent to Cong. Curt Weldon, Gov. Tom Ridge and state Rep. Greg Vitali.

Dr. J. Davidson, echoed her philosophy when she said she is reminded of a future of any society is in its children, and that we will be guaranteed with education... to child is born to be a failure. By stimulating minds, by encouraging and nurturing other dreams and aspirations, we guarantee our own

er words for a city struggling to restructure schools to prepare students to function in the century.

er words as well for all whose homes and businesses are in the shadow of the city and count on its assets to ensure a strong future for the region.

## February: Month or Cloud Watching

By DICK JAMES

end of January, like the rest of the month, went sofly into night. Only a few snow flurries and an attempt at a small kept January from being snow-free. Fear not, snow lovers: at two months of snowfall are on the horizon.

February is still a winter month. It is the last of the three winter months, but there is no doubt it is winter. The days will continue to lengthen, the sun will gain strength as it continues to climb in the sky, but it is still winter.

Underdog Day will have been celebrated by those with an eye for the stupid and merry. What else could you do in February except celebrate a non-myth, whose origins were when the Europeans crossed the Atlantic.

February is one of the great months for watching clouds. It is enough to be out of doors. The sun is still low on the horizon and temperature contrasts are great enough to get clouds to form under way almost any afternoon.

A spot where the view of the sky is unobstructed and look the biggest canvases in the world. Remember, clouds are not things. They change, boil, roll and flash their inner physics for all to see.

February afternoons, heating will begin the process of construction. Simple thermals roll up from the surface and into a vast array of water drops we call a cloud. The top cloud is brilliantly white. It also is cold as it projects into the sun adds dashes of light and shade. Deep valleys in the building cloud tower are flecked with the seedless hues of pink.

A delicate background that seems to have sense not to interfere with the endless process of a cloud in construction. The grays, which decorate the bottom and sides of a February cloud, deepen with the passage of the afternoon finale comes when the sun reaches the horizon and the sky's canvas is bathed in reds and pinks too numerous to count. As the light disappears, so do the clouds. The sunlight ated them, sustained them and covered them with a magi-show is gone.

isplay is usually not discussed with others. There is no that you have just seen is unique to you. Your eyes feed information no one else could sense. It was your author's, your clouds this week out of doors.

mental Education in Roxborough.

Gridlock In Harrisburg

Suburban Wayne Times

## Construction Hurting Villanova Businesses

Following is a copy of a letter to the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. It was made available by the author.

District Six Engineer  
Pa. Department of Transportation  
200 Radnor Chester Rd.  
St. Davids, Pa.

I am writing this letter to you on behalf of the stores and commercial establishments in the 800 block of Lancaster Ave., Villanova. The continued construction of the storm sewer system along Lancaster Ave. and N. Spring Mill Rd. has finally become intolerable and is having a serious effect on our attempts to keep our businesses afloat throughout this ongoing saga. Although I am sure you are aware of the timetable of events, I would like to recap our trials and tribulations with road closing since 1991.

In June of 1991, the Spring Mill Rd. Bridge was declared structurally unsound and closed by PennDOT. This left only N. Ithan Ave., a heavily congested road next to Villanova University, as a route customers from the entire north side of the railroad tracks could cross onto Lancaster Ave. Naturally these people, rather than sit in long traffic jams, opted to seek other stores for the services we had previously provided them. We all sighed and resolved to weather the loss of the bridge and do our best to maintain a steady base of customers. At that time, we had no knowledge when any work to reopen the bridge would take place.

In July of 1991, a vicious rumor circulated among our stores that The Philadelphia Suburban Water Co. would begin road work to move all their water mains in anticipation of a storm sewer project that was planned for the road. In August, that rumor proved true, as the Water Co. arrived and began digging up the road every day for several months as they moved all the mains and services to the buildings along the route.

During this project, we noticed that the Aldwyn Lane bridge used by the SEPTA P&W line was closed for repairs for one year. Aldwyn Lane was used by many of our customers on the south side of

Lancaster to avoid the construction delays along Lancaster Ave. and still be able to drive to and from our businesses. Again, we bit the bullet and did our best to keep business flowing.

Several months went by and we noticed a crew of workers making cuts in the concrete along Lancaster Ave. This went on for several weeks, and we learned that PECCO was planning moving into the area to replace all of their gas lines along Lancaster Ave. Villanova. We watched for months as the dust mounted, the iron plates along the road banged and traffic slowed more and more. Although much of PECCO's work was done at night, the road often was down two lanes during the daytime with crews working on other projects and the phone company working on moving their underground phone lines. Again we weathered the storm and waved a fond farewell as the last work crew left the road.

Thanksgiving day of 1993, the Spring Mill Rd. Bridge finally opens up and we all breathe a sigh of relief. Maybe we were through the worst and we could work diligently to rebuild our businesses since all roads now led to Villanova.

About a year went by and we had settled into a false sense of security. When one day we heard a familiar noise and saw a terrifying sight. The man with the concrete cutter was marching up and down Lancaster Ave., again making new cuts and spraying new colors on the street. This went on for several weeks and then everyone disappeared and nothing else happened. We all heard rumors of impending road work and estimates of several months to several years of road work.

I believe it was the fall of 1994 that Primo Construction began working on the road in earnest. The work took place during the day and sometimes at night. Traffic along Lancaster Ave. immediately settled into the familiar routine of not moving and familiar faces in our stores became less and less. Even our most loyal customers apologized profusely but they too

began to come in less frequently. It is now January of 1995 and we are all in serious trouble and we still face Lancaster Ave. being completely dug up and resurfaced during what should be our busiest time of year.

What follows is a list of concerns and complaints regarding this current road construction.

1. Since the Spring Mill Rd. Bridge was closed in 1991 and this storm sewer project was apparently already on the drawing board, why couldn't the storm sewer construction have been done when the road was already closed?

2. PennDOT assured us that during this current phase of construction the great majority would take place during the night hours. We were told that there would only be occasional, unavoidable work that had to be done during the daytime. This was a false and misleading statement. Lancaster Ave. is presently being worked on at the same time and traffic is generally backed up to County Line Rd.

3. If some roadwork must be done during the daytime, why is there not an off duty police officer hired by the contractor to expedite traffic flow at one of the busiest intersections in the area. Flagmen holding a Slow and Stop sign do not control the flow of traffic nor are they trained to do so.

4. Why is the contractor allowed to leave large portions of Spring Mill Rd. open on either side without backfilling long trenches created in a dangerous situation for motorists. This is not an exaggeration. We have witnessed many incidents where motorists unfamiliar with the construction have almost driven in the trenches. Since I began composing this letter, a motorist did drive into one of the trenches near the Coastal service station requiring a tow truck and a police accident report. Curiously enough, immediately after this incident the contractor began to backfill the trenches.

5. Holes along Lancaster Ave. are covered with iron plates that are simply dropped over the holes in a haphazard manner. The plates are not welded together nor is any temporary patch put over the plates. I watched the contractors

## Villanova Businesses

hired by PECCO to replace the gas mains cover their work every night and weld the plates together.

6. Why was Primo Construction Co., Inc., a company that has a record of missed deadlines awarded the contract. According to the Philadelphia Inquirer, Primo Construction was hired to replace a bridge in Calhoun Township that was closed in 1992. They were supposed to meet a deadline of March 30, 1994, but as of June 16, 1994, the bridge was still unopened. PennDOT responded that they were firing the contractor \$1,000 a day for every day past the deadline. They also said there was no excuse for the delay by Primo Construction Co., yet they received the contract for this major road project. Why?

These are only some of our concerns and questions we have over this four year project that has had such an impact on our lives. We don't need a meeting with PennDOT where we are given a timetable for the work to be done on the road or names of people we can contact if a construction vehicle is blocking the driveway. We need PennDOT officials to take definitive action and change the daytime construction on the roadway. I also would like to note that I have had contracts with the engineer on the project, Jeff Coran, who has been very courteous and has attempted to be responsive to our needs. The time has come for decisions to be made by someone other than the project engineer. We the business people and the residents deserve PennDOT's immediate attention to the situation. I apologize for the length of this letter but anything less would not give a full overview of our problems. I, along with other business owners along Lancaster Ave. and residents of the area, also intend to pursue this problem through our state and federal representatives. Please feel free to contact me at my other daytime work phone 615-6228 or my home phone number of 527-3180 if you have any questions or would like to discuss this problem further. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

J. MARK KEENAN  
Villanova Hardware

## Down With Harley's Conservative Critics

To The Editor:  
The January 12th edition printed a Letter To The Editor criticizing Ellen Harley's written report

They are: 1.) Every anti-woman reproduction rights article never uses the word "woman" presumably because...

## Sheehan Was Evasive

To The Editor:  
It was with more than casual interest that I read the "Readers Response" to Ellen Harley's Letter "article in the letters to the editor section of your Jan. 12 issue. In

issues and not of major importance to the voters of the 19th district.  
Representative Sheehan's position on both of these issues which ARE important to many of her

B

Jan '95

270-1485  
527-0427  
Abe

C

SR 0030 (630)  
PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
Engineering District 6-0  
200 Radnor Chester Road  
St. Davids, PA 19087  
May 5, 1994

P.R.: 67

Contact: Gene Blaum  
Community Relations Coordinator  
(610) 964-6673

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**MAJOR DRAINAGE CONSTRUCTION TO SLOW OFF-PEAK TRAVEL  
ON U.S. ROUTE 30 AND STATE ROUTE 320 IN RADNOR TOWNSHIP**

ST. DAVIDS (May 5) -- Construction is scheduled to start Monday (May 9) to replace the antiquated drainage system at the intersection of U.S. Route 30 (Lancaster Avenue) and State Route 320 in Radnor Township, an operation that will result in off-peak travel delays for approximately seven months, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) said today.

The four-stage project, designed to eliminate storm-water flooding at the intersection, will restrict travel on Route 30 and Route 320 weekdays from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., and week nights from 6:30 p.m. to 6 a.m. The contractor plans to alternate work between days and nights, depending on the operation.

PennDOT District Engineer Stephen B. Lester said construction will close one travel lane on Route 30 and Route 320 during working hours, but no traffic restrictions are permitted during the peak morning and afternoon drive times.

During stage one, which starts Monday and last until early July, construction will reduce eastbound Route 30 to one lane just west of Route 320. Route 320 also will be restricted to one lane south of Route 30.

Under the \$1,732,994 project, construction crews will install underground drainage pipes and inlets on both highways; reconstruct and pave the intersection; erect new traffic signals; and remove an underground tank from a parcel at the southwest corner of the intersection.

"This modernized drainage system is badly needed at the intersection to eliminate flooding conditions that occur during heavy rainstorms," Lester said.

-- more --

During the three remaining stages of construction, the traffic restrictions consist of:

- . Stage Two: Route 320 reduced to one lane just south of Route 30: Eastbound  
Route 30 reduced to one lane east of Route 320.
- . Stage Three: Westbound Route 30 West reduced to one lane just west of Route 320.
- . Stage Four: One lane closed on Route 30 and Route 320 for paving.

Primo Contracting, Inc, of Exton, Pa. is the general contractor on the project which is financed with federal and state funds.

Construction is expected to be completed in December → "1994" ?

# # #

it could be...  
into another (work) season, he has been...



Michael Timby

"And you come out here." Villanova University's Executive Director of Facilities, John Gallen, points out on a model of the campus showing how the Lancaster Avenue/Ithan Avenue pedestrian underpass will link north and south campuses.

# Villanova to build walkway under Lancaster Avenue

By Helen Cooper  
Staff writer

Villanova University walkers will be going underground instead of crossing Lancaster Avenue at North and South Ithan when a tunnel is dug and concreted - and sidewalks are completely fenced off to discourage daredevil jay-walkers.

The purpose of the \$4.5 to \$5 million project connecting the north and south campuses is safety, says John Gallen, executive director of facilities management.

"We haven't had a lot of pedestrian accidents," he said, "but we have car accidents because of pedestrians."

The brightly lit concrete underpass will have a clearance of eight and one-half feet to allow for bicycles and small utility vehicles, a handicapped ramp and a choice of paths to follow to northside buildings.

Utilities are already being relocated on Lancaster and South Ithan in advance of construction, expected to begin next spring and run for about 20 months.

Before motorists groan, "Not again!", Gallen hastens to say traffic flow will be considered, with detours set up to expedite movement. He says it will be an inconvenience but not a major tie-up such as the one on Lancaster Avenue at Route 320 in recent months.

Villanova will relocate the

parking lot entrances on South Ithan Avenue and mark a connector lane through each of the two lots south of the intersection.

A line of trees is planned in front of each of the lots and along Ithan Avenue.

"Now that we're an arboretum we're much more sensitive to landscaping," Gallen said. "It goes along with every major project. We want a tree-lined vista." The tentative choice for Lancaster is male ginkgos, with purple plum trees drawn on North and South Ithan.

Now, the state Department of Transportation must solicit bids on the contract. PennDOT will run the job, with the university paying for pre-agreed portions of the work.

# Penn to enc

By Helen Cooper  
Staff writer

No more closedowns, no backed-up traffic through nova - that's the news from state Department of Transportation.

Calling the continuing

# While drivers bake in 'Nova, the contractor takes vacation

By Helen Cooper  
Staff writer

Villanova's main drag is still dragging along unfinished, and now the deadline for completion of the Lancaster Avenue/North Spring Mill Road paving is pushed back to Sept. 11.

Why? - Primo contractor John Colona decided to go on vacation this week, PennDOT said, and just shut down the project.

State Department of Transportation administrator Andrew War-

ren earlier set Sept. 1 as the deadline for finishing the road job, acknowledging that some off-road work might need more time. Crucial to the whole face-lifting and flood control job is creation of a water detention pond on the unsightly southwest corner. That part of the \$2 million contract is expected to continue through the fall.

Eventually, that corner is to be landscaped as passive park space - one more roadside improvement for the Radnor Gateways Enhance-

ment Project. Nobody is holding his/her breath waiting for the transformation.

PennDOT spokesperson Lois Morasco said that Colona had been asked to suspend the road paving last week, because Villanova University students were flocking to campus for the fall semester. She indicated that no one expected Primo crews to take an additional week off.

See Page 6A

6-A

The Suburban and Wayne Times

Thursday, August 31, 1995

## Drivers angered by crew's absence

From Page 1A

But Villanova Hardware's Malla Keenan said road crews returned Wednesday, brought in big equipment and closed down one lane of the pike for two days. She was told this "was a different project - not paving but laying a binder.

"It was ugly... it looked horrible when the freshman parents came in. One woman from Chicago told me she was backed up in traffic for 40 minutes between the Blue Route and the university. But Jeff Coran (PennDOT project engineer) said he couldn't tell the contractor not to work between 9 and 3:30."

(Out-of-towners had been given directions to campus by the university. Many were totally unfamiliar with the Main Line.)

Morasco said that paving the pike is to resume the day after Labor Day. That means one lane will be closed in each direction while

the topping is laid - another week of gridlock unless crews work in off hours or at night. "Hopefully it will be at night," Morasco said. She noted that Colona has not filed a work schedule yet with PennDOT, "but he has to have the road open Sept. 11."

Villanova pike-front merchants say they'll believe it when they see the orange cones gone. These appear to have multiplied recently, creating further eyesores. As one person said, "One man is in a manhole and there are 78 of those cones all over the road."

Still unfinished is paving of Route 320, and all the curbing is not yet in place.

"But what's the use of complaining?," Keenan asked. "Somehow Colonia has got the best of everybody anyway...public funds and this turkey can embarrass PennDOT officials. I want to know, how does a contractor get on top of PennDOT?"



# PennDOT clips 'Novavork, sets finish deadline

From Page 1A

the sudden shortening of the project was the ever-escalating cost of the job. Originally bid at \$1.7 million, the price tag has risen to \$2.7 million. If it continues in the same vein it's going at this point, it could be over \$3 million...," he said.

Warren said the four sections already dug out to a depth of 18 inches and rebuilt from the base up solve the major safety concerns. To have continued to excavate between the patch areas would have involved extensive relocations with utilities, he noted. He said what has been done will make the road safe and serviceable in the next century.

safe and serviceable in the next century.

He said the elaborate laid down under the P & W to solve the problem of water will be watched "if it does what we think it's go to do. We believe it has cur the flood problem."

Still to be completed on

the Routes 30/320 intersection and milling there and at other spots. Beginning at Villanova University, work crews will lay 1,000 feet of binding material and then top coat any scratch-and-mill work in front of the stores would take at best one shift. Primo is to clean up the project by Labor Day.

Villanova Hardware's Mike Keenan asked that Primo remove its orange barrels when crews are not on the job, because customers see the barrels as a warning of delays and traffic snarls.

Ed Sylvester, Pike-front property owner, advised Warren not to give Primo any more contracts.

Merchants like Pete Damian of Coastal Stop'n Shop have laid off employees and seen sales dip by more than 50 percent during the marathon road project.

At presstime the road machinery and orange cones sat idle at roadside awaiting a go-ahead from PennDOT on the revised work schedule requested from Primo.

Thursday, July 13, 1995

50 CENTS

New CHS hoop coach -



# PennDOT cuts project to end 'Nova gridlock

By Helen Cooper  
Staff writer

No more closedowns, no more backed-up traffic through Villanova - that's the news from the State Department of Transportation.

of Lancaster Avenue reconstruction in Villanova "intolerable," PennDOT district administrator Andrew Warren announced that the project will be cut back to the original resurfacing contract and a Sept. 1 deadline be "enforced" on the contractor, Primo Construction.

Calling the continuing trauma

Warren faced the monthly

meeting of engineers, Villanova University and Radnor Township representatives and pike-front merchants with the good news Thursday, announcing it would be their final meeting. Primo representatives did not attend.

Warren said a major factor in

See Page 4B

# 'Project from hell' limits Rt. 30 in 'Nova to one lane

By Helen Cooper  
Staff writer

There's another weekend "from hell" coming up, for travelers on Lancaster Avenue at the P & W crossing in Villanova - which will have one of four lanes open for traffic - even though contractor John Colona said a push last weekend would finish that pike patch.

Pike-front merchants groaned at the news last week that there are four more scheduled weekends

of lost business during a tense and testy meeting with PennDOT engineers, Colona and his Primo foremen - and this time, District PennDOT Administrator Andrew Warren. With the-buck-stops-here candor, he answered every complaint with "Call me," giving merchants and Villanova Postmaster Don Gallo both his office and home phone numbers.

"This may be akin to the project from hell," he said, mentioning the latest snag in a pike-resurfacing job that should have been done

by July; it's now targeted for completion in mid-October.

The latest setback was finding water with nowhere to go below the pike sub-grade when excavators dug up the pike under the trolley overpass. They couldn't dig deeper or they would have hit utility lines. The first solution was to dump six inches of crushed stone and 10 inches of bituminous base cover into the "swamp" before the road was paved. It buckled within

See Page 10A

## Gridlock expected this weekend

From Page 1A

two weeks.

So three materials new to Pennsylvania and the people who know how to lay them were brought in from Virginia last weekend. The pliant synthetics are called Amoco Geotextile, Signode Geogrid and Presto Geosystems Geoweb and stabilize the sub-grade of the roadway, PennDOT pavement management engineer Lorraine Patberg explained. "Grid" and "web" are apt descriptions of the pocketed frameworks. Two of the four lanes under the bridge got it.

Traffic backed up west to the Blue Route and east to Ithan Avenue with only one lane open from 6:30 p.m. on.

PennDOT press secretary Gene Blaum explained of the half-finished job that engineers want to see how the new stabilizer holds up on the two westbound lanes before the technique is used on the two eastbound lanes this weekend - weather allowing.

Merchants saw the material at last week's meeting without comment.

What was discussed centered on complaints of idle workcrews during the week and why Colona

can't put on more crews.

Pete Damian of Coastal Stop 'n' Shop told Colona, "We look out the window and see no activity."

"I'll show you a lot of red ink," the contractor replied, saying his people are working 50 to 60 hours a week.

Property-owner Ed Silverie suggested Colona put on several shifts a day, that the contract be rewritten to incorporate deadline penalties and incentives and that the whole project be watch-dogged.

"It's an abomination. These people could lose their businesses," he said of the merchants' plight. He said they've endured six years of detours and construction, starting with the closedown of the Route 320 bridge.

"What if it rains every weekend in June?" Damian wanted to know.

William "Mac" McCoy, representing Ashwood Manor Civic Association, suggested that if a work weekend is lost to the weather, crews make it up at night.

Paving can't be done at night, PennDOT's Ron Beck answered. He said if crews weren't finished a section before morning rush hour, the result would be catastrophic.

Villanova Postmaster Don Gallo wanted assurances from Warren that his mail would get through during the weekend blockades. Primo flagmen turned away a tractor-trailer delivering mail delivery to the post office last time. "I have an obligation to deliver the mail," he told Warren.

He was told to have drivers tell the flagmen the mail has to go through.

Warren said he wanted merchants, township and civic representatives at the meeting to understand the *whens* and *whats* of the project.

So Colona summed up: four more weekend ordeals for merchants - that's the best case scenario, three weeks to do the eastbound curb lane in front of the Villanova merchants, three weeks on the lane in front of the stores, then tear up the middle lanes - three weeks per lane.

He said a realistic finish date is the end of September or mid-October. "We'll work around the clock to get it paved and open," he said.

The bottom line: the total project cost for what was to have been a resurfacing job between Ithan Avenue and the P & W overpass has escalated by about \$1 million to \$2.7 million.

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