



COUNTY OF LYCOMING

TESTIMONY



State and local officials break ground on Route 15 Steam Valley Mountain Project

Prepared for the
Pennsylvania House Transportation Committee

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INTRODUCTION

Good afternoon Chairmen Markosek and Geist, I am Mark Murawski, Transportation Planner for the County of Lycoming. At your invitation, the Lycoming County Board of Commissioners have asked me to provide testimony regarding their views on transportation needs in our County and to offer constructive suggestions related to the transportation funding crisis that confronts our Commonwealth.

We agree that transportation funding is in extremely short supply and that the Commonwealth is facing a significant crisis if no action is taken to find the needed revenue to properly maintain and upgrade our vast transportation system. What I want to stress to you today is that Lycoming County officials work very closely with PennDOT to spend the limited transportation dollars available to us in a prudent manner and will continue to make wise investments with future dollars regardless of the funding levels that will be made available. We are in agreement with the PennDOT District 3-0 philosophy that stresses:

- *Maintenance First*
- *Delivery of Projects on Time and Within Budget*
- *Safety*

So what are we doing with the limited transportation funds that are available? I will now highlight the most significant projects in Lycoming County that have just been

completed in the last two years to underscore we do deliver results using only 1% of the Commonwealth's total federal and state funding.

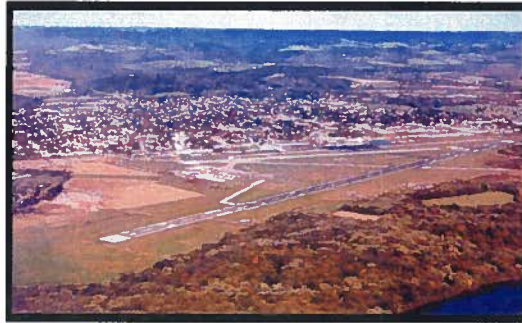
Market Street Bridge Replacement



Market Street Bridge Replacement Dedication Ceremony

On October 20, 2007 our community celebrated the grand opening of the new \$ 82 million Market Street Bridge in the City of Williamsport and Borough of South Williamsport. The new four lane bridge spanning the Susquehanna River provides a dramatic new gateway to Williamsport and includes a Single Point Urban Interchange, (SPUI) full directional connection to Interstate 180 from US 15 along with numerous enhancements and three new roundabouts along Via Bella. A decade of work has clearly paid off and this new bridge will serve us well over the next century. We commend PennDOT for a job well done!

AIRPORT RUNWAY EXTENSION



On the same day which was touted as “Transportation Day in Lycoming County”, state and local officials gathered together to break ground on a project to extend the main runway 9/27 at the Williamsport Regional Airport. This \$ 5 million investment in aviation safety improvements include an extension to the runway by 350 feet on the western end making the runway a total length of 6,850 feet. The project also includes extending the parallel taxiway system, clearing obstructions at runway approaches, relocating the Instrument Landing System on the east end and adding an ILS approach on the west end. These safety improvements will help to significantly lower the minimum visibility requirements for approach aircraft and will accommodate all types of aircraft used for commercial and general aviation operations forecasted in our Airport Master Plan during the next 20 years. As Chairman of our Airport Authority, my hat goes off to the PennDOT Bureau of Aviation for helping us get this project done!

ROUTE 15 IMPROVEMENTS

As President of the Route 15 Coalition, I am extremely pleased to witness the outstanding progress made to continue the improvements to US Route 15 in Lycoming and Tioga Counties during the past two years. From the groundbreaking of the new Steam Valley Mountain highway realignment project in March 2008 to the ribbon-cutting of the new four lane section between Tioga, PA and Lawrenceville PA/NY border project in October, 2008 our steady march to complete the upgrade of US 15 to a modern north-south highway throughout Pennsylvania and New York continues unabated. We are encouraged to see that we have handed the baton off successfully to New York State with the groundbreaking ceremony held last fall to start construction of their deadly five mile long two lane section of US 15 between the state border and Presho, NY. Their recent completion of the US 15 / I-86 interchange at Painted Post is further evidence of New York's \$ 200 million commitment to improve US 15 to Corning, NY as part of future I-99.

US 15 Reaches the PA / NY Border





New I-86 / Route 15 Interchange under construction at Painted Post, NY

The Route 15 Coalition is now focused on our final journey to complete Route 15 in PA by supporting the Central Susquehanna Valley Thruway (CSVT) project between Selinsgrove and Interstate 80. We applaud Governor Rendell's decision to re-activate the final design phase and are working with our Federal and State elected officials to secure Appalachian Development Highway System designation for the CSVT corridor along with the reinstatement of toll credits as eligible match for Appalachia funds to secure the estimated \$ 525 million needed to complete construction of this vital regional project in accordance with the PennDOT schedule.



ARCH STREET BRIDGE REPLACEMENT

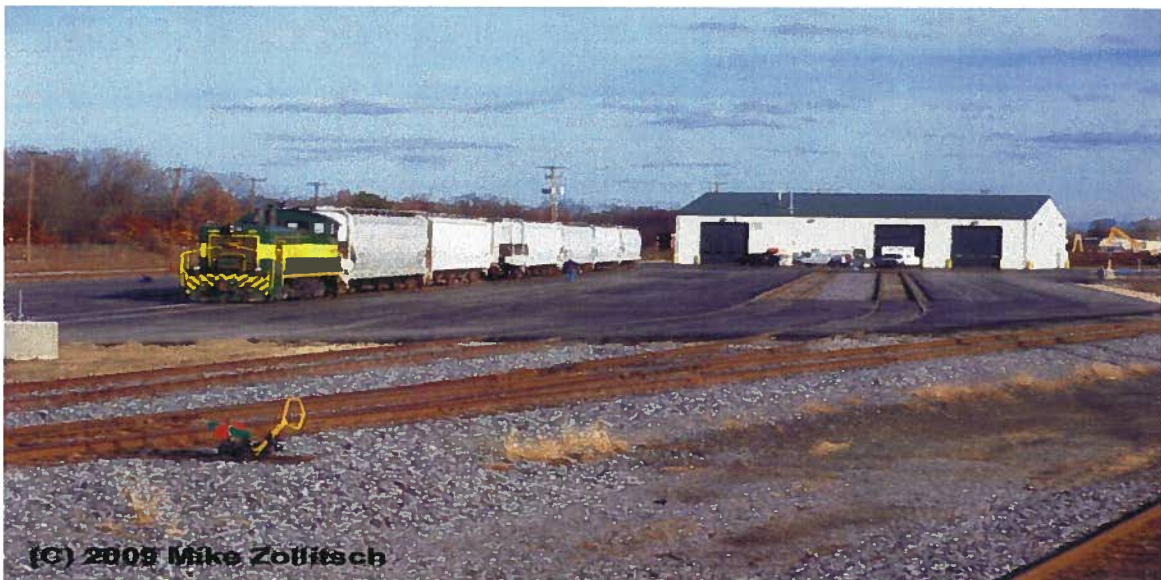
The most significant upcoming investment in Lycoming County bridges will be the replacement of the Arch Street Bridge over the West Branch Susquehanna River between the City of Williamsport and Borough of Duboistown. Design of this bridge is completed by PennDOT with construction of the new bridge scheduled to begin this year. This will be the last major bridge over the Susquehanna River to be replaced in Lycoming County.



Arch Street Bridge built in 1923

NEWBERRY YARD BULK TRANSFER FACILITY

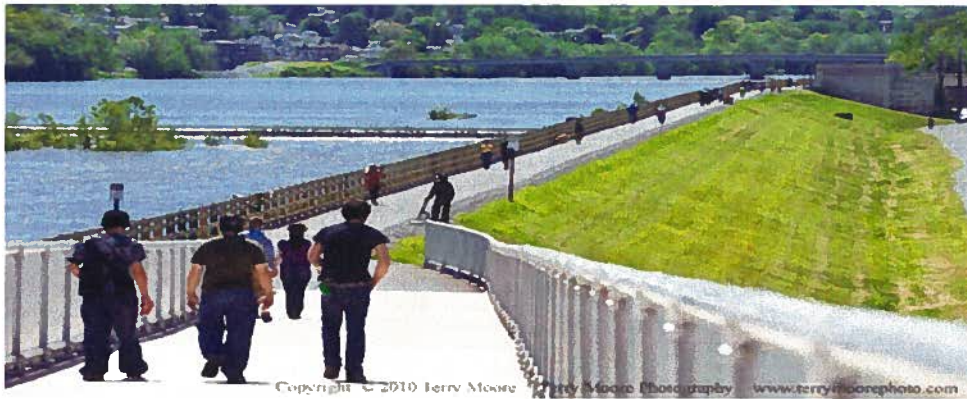
Intermodal transportation for the 21st century is now in full view at the Newberry Rail Yard with the completion of a new bulk transfer truck / rail facility undertaken by the SEDA-COG Joint Rail Authority. This state of the art \$ 4 million project houses Bulkmatic Transport Company as the primary tenant who relocated from their Maynard Street site since there is no room for expansion. Bulkmatic transloads over 40,000 rail cars at 60 sites in North America and ships a variety of bulk materials such as plastic resin, corn sweeteners and flour. This site offers more room for Bulkmatic to expand their operations and can house additional tenants. The Lycoming Valley Railroad provides the rail service which is now fully operational as of November, 2009.



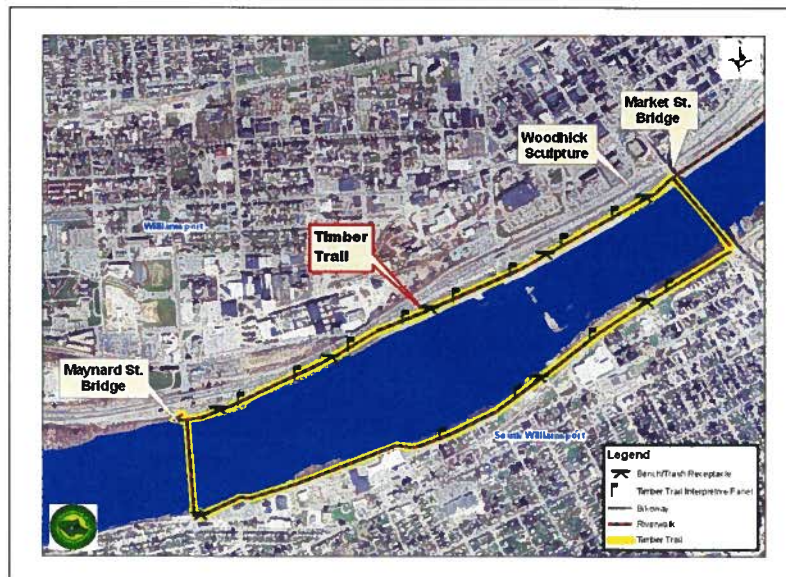
Newly Built Newberry Rail Yard Bulk Transfer Facility

SUSQUEHANNA RIVERWALK

We have just held the grand opening dedication ceremony for the new Susquehanna Riverwalk on May 15, 2010, a 4.5 mile paved bikeway and walkway on top of the flood levee system in Williamsport and South Williamsport with eventual planned connections to the Pine Creek Rail Trailhead in Jersey Shore and the Montoursville, Muncy and Montgomery Areas as part of the overall Susquehanna Greenway System which could eventually span from Lake Ontario near Rochester NY to the Chesapeake Bay. The Riverwalk incorporates interpretative signage funded under the Lumber Heritage Program.



This is the most significant transportation enhancement project undertaking in Lycoming County with a total \$ 2.5 million federal and state investment and will be a major tourist draw that promotes healthy and green communities.



PUBLIC TRANSIT CAPITAL INVESTMENTS



Under the leadership direction of River Valley Transportation Services, our fixed route public transit provider serving Lycoming County, the City of Williamsport is in the final design phases of constructing an expansion to the Williamsport Trade and Transit Centre and developing a new 350 space parking deck referred to as the Church Street Transportation Center in the Central Business District which will be under construction next month. This nearly \$ 20 million federal, state and local investment will significantly enhance the availability and efficiency of transit services and will complement the City's overall downtown revitalization initiatives begun with the Market Street Bridge Replacement Project.



Rendition of proposed Church Street Transportation Center, City of Williamsport



River Valley Transit Bus at Trade and Transit Centre

As Chairman of the Northcentral PA Regional Public Transit Task Force, I am pleased to work with the PennDOT Bureau of Public Transportation to conduct a comprehensive regional transit needs assessment in a six county region consisting of Lycoming, Union, Northumberland, Snyder, Montour and Columbia Counties. We are using Gannett Fleming as the study consultant and expect to have service improvement recommendations by the end of this year.

As you can see, we have been busy in Lycoming County working on improving all modes of our transportation system and completing several major projects during the past two years has certainly been cause for celebration! However, even with all this recent success, we are facing a sobering reality that the Commonwealth's drastic shortfalls in transportation funding will inhibit our ability to sustain this progress or even meet basic transportation system maintenance needs. I will now highlight our future funding needs for each mode of transportation.

HIGHWAY FUNDING NEEDS

Looking over the next four federal fiscal years (FFY 2009-2012) we are currently resurfacing about 42 miles of state roads annually. The target annual resurfacing should be 52 miles to meet pavement life cycle standards as determined by PennDOT District 3-0. Achieving this target would require an additional investment of \$ 3.6 million annually. Although we have made considerable progress in reducing the percentage of poor International Roughness Index (IRI) state road mileage during the past four years (from 25% to 18%), our large total state owned road system of 789 miles coupled with the expected annual shortfall of \$ 3.6 million can start to reverse this trend making delayed road maintenance more costly in future years.



Further, during FFY 2009, WATS roadway funding total availability is \$ 16.3 million when adding up the TIP base highway allocation, Act 44 revenue, ARRA funds and the Maintenance allocation. **Due to projected funding shortfalls anticipated during the**

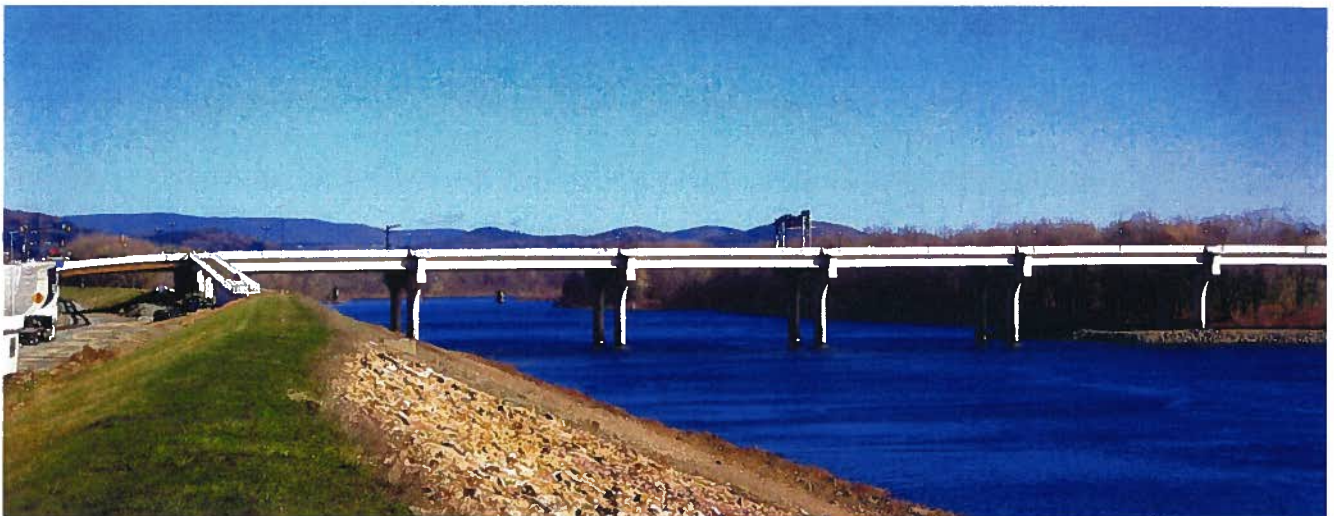
next three federal fiscal years, it is anticipated that the \$ 16.3 million will fall to \$ 12.3 million in FFY 2010; \$ 11.5 million in FFY 2011 and \$ 11.6 million in FFY 2012. The required funding level to properly maintain our state highway system is about \$ 15.7 million annually so these expected revenue shortfalls will compromise our preventative maintenance goals and lead to eventual system deterioration if left unchecked by a real funding solution. We have maintained our commitment to Interstate preservation by recently investing \$ 1.3 million toward improving Interstate 180.

BRIDGE FUNDING NEEDS

Currently there are 512 state owned and 111 locally owned bridges within Lycoming County due to several thousand miles of roads and over 2,200 miles of streams. We have been making considerable progress in addressing our backlog of structurally deficient bridges and were hard at work on this goal long before the tragic I-35 Bridge collapse in Minnesota in 2007 that put structurally deficient bridges in the national spotlight. This is evident in that about 13% of our state bridges in Lycoming County are structurally deficient, or a little more than half of the state-wide average. In 2007, we had 77 structurally deficient, (SD) state bridges greater than 8 feet in length and two years later we have cut SD bridges down to 69. We project a further reduction in SD projects to 36 after the 2012 lettings.

Reducing the backlog of locally owned bridges is more problematic due to lack of funding. Since 2004 locally owned SD bridges 20 feet in length or greater have increased

from 29 to 31 bridges and we will only reduce this number back to 29 bridges after the 2012 lettings based on our current TIP. **We have just completed a bridge pilot inventory initiative (first County in PA to do so) identifying another 82 locally owned bridges (8-20 foot span length) where 70% are in fair to poor condition so we fear the Commonwealth's total bridge situation is more dire than currently realized since most Counties and municipalities in PA are not collecting data on these smaller local structures.** In terms of weight restrictions, 8 state bridges have load postings while 38 local bridges fall in this category in Lycoming County. Expected intensity in heavy hauling from natural gas drilling activity further adds to the concerns about the fragile nature of our roads and bridges.



New Market Street Bridge over Susquehanna River with direct I-180 Connection

In summary, in order to achieve our target goals to reduce structurally deficient bridges we require about \$ 10.1 million annually and we project possible reductions in funding to \$ 8.7 million in FFY 2010; \$ 7.5 million in 2011 and \$ 7.6 million in 2012.

HIGHWAY SAFETY



Our County has maintained a strong commitment toward promotion of highway safety by working closely with PennDOT and other stakeholder groups to develop strategies to reduce fatalities including:

- *Eliminate unprotected bridge ends*
- *Eliminate cable guide rail*
- *Maintain rumble strip program*
- *Target crash cluster locations*
- *Encourage cooperative law enforcement efforts*

A major safety improvement project has been recently completed along the US 220 corridor between Jersey Shore and Williamsport to address accidents which included various improvements at several key intersections and installation of channelized left turn lanes. This corridor is part of the future Interstate 99 system, but project development activity was suspended to construct a four lane limited access upgrade due to funding limitations, hence targeted short term safety strategies were pursued. Our County

continues to support I-99 completion in PA and NY and continues to work cooperatively with Clinton County officials to support advancement of their section of US 220 between I-80 and Salona.

Our next major focus with safety dollars is targeted to address the high fatality crash rates along US 15 Montgomery Pike section over Bald Eagle Mountain. A median barrier with access controls is in the design stages at an estimated cost of \$ 9 million. Due to limited availability of WATS safety funds, it will be necessary to let this section in five separate contracts over the next decade, unless additional funding can be secured by our County.

INTERMODAL INVESTMENTS

As noted earlier, we have made over \$ 30 million worth of recent capital investments to upgrade our public transit, freight rail and airport facilities with the construction of the Trade and Transit Centre Expansion, Church Street Transportation Center, Newberry Rail Yard Bulk Transfer Facility and main runway and parallel taxiway extensions at the Williamsport Regional Airport. We continue to work closely with our intermodal transportation partners and PennDOT to complete design and construction of the Williamsport Regional Airport Access Road project which has several intermodal components such as a new access road between Interstate 180 and the Airport, replacement of the deteriorated Lycoming Valley Railroad Bridge over Loyalsock Creek, relocation of the Loyalsock bikeway, reconfiguration of the freight rail siding serving Glenn O. Hawbaker's asphalt plant and a airport / railroad warning system to further

AIRPORT FUNDING NEEDS

The Williamsport Regional Airport is one of the 14 commercial air service airports in Pennsylvania serving a 13 county area.

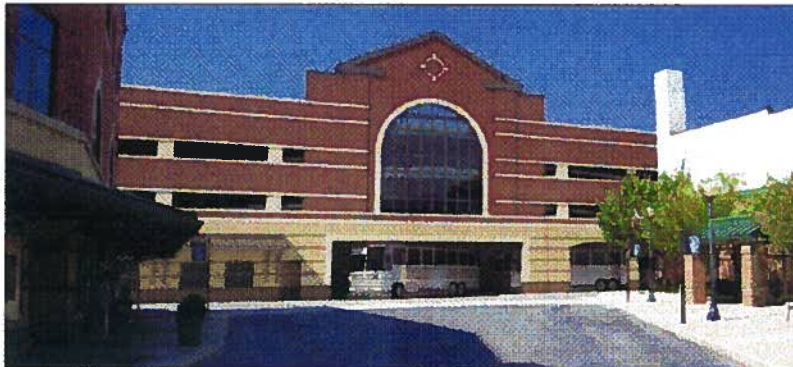


On average, our airport annually receives about \$ 1.2 million in federal Airport Improvement Program, (AIP) funding along with about \$ 135,000 in state funding from the Aviation Development Grant, (ADG) grant program. The Lycoming County Commissioners provide an additional \$ 325,000 annually to serve as matching funds for these programs and to maintain operation of the Air Traffic Control Tower. The authority also receives revenue from airport tenant leases and passenger facility charges. This level of funding is proving insufficient in addressing our aviation needs as evidenced by the Airport Authority's continuous efforts to balance the budget by drawing down its cash reserves by \$ 60,000 per year leaving a current balance less than \$ 50,000. Higher utility

costs are one major factor leading to depletion of cash reserves.

In order to properly address our aviation needs, an additional \$ 1 million in federal, state and local funding should be provided annually.

FIXED ROUTE PUBLIC TRANSIT FUNDING NEEDS



River Valley Transit is the only fixed route transit provider serving Lycoming County transporting 1,287,649 passengers last year with an annual operating budget of \$4,216,000 derived from the following funding sources:

PA Act 44	\$ 2,882,00
Federal	\$ 300,000
Farebox	\$ 808,000
Local Share	\$ 226,000

We would like to stress that public transit has not seen an increase in operating funds for the last three years while fuel prices, health care, and pension costs continue to increase annually higher than the rate of inflation. As a result, we are now facing annual service reductions and fare increases which leads to lower revenues and lower ridership. Many of our riders are low income persons who cannot afford large transit fare increases to make work, health care, social services and other trips. We must have a predictable and sustainable increased transportation funding solution. On the capital funding side, our bus

fleet continues to age and we lack the funds necessary to replace these buses when they have exceeded their useful life which is a serious concern. We are also faced with a \$ 5 million shortfall to complete our Trade and Transit Center expansion project which is our high priority capital transit facility need long in the planning and design stages. Clearly, public transit must be part of any increased Commonwealth investment in our overall transportation system. To do our part, our fixed transit provider constantly strives to control costs and increase route and service efficiencies. Simply put, we are heading in the wrong direction with the current transit funding levels and the negative consequences to Pennsylvanians relying on public transit will be severe if a solution is not found soon.

RAIL FREIGHT FUNDING NEEDS



The SEDA-COG Joint Rail Authority owns 33.5 miles of rail freight short line facilities in Lycoming County and the Lycoming Valley Railroad is their contract operator. The remaining 31.8 miles of rail lines (Harrisburg-Buffalo Mainline) are owned and operated by Norfolk Southern. Since the purchase of the rail line from Conrail in 1996, the Joint Rail Authority and Lycoming Valley Railroad, (LVRR) have cultivated substantial growth in business with annual carloads rising from 5,000 to over 14,000 in 2009 with

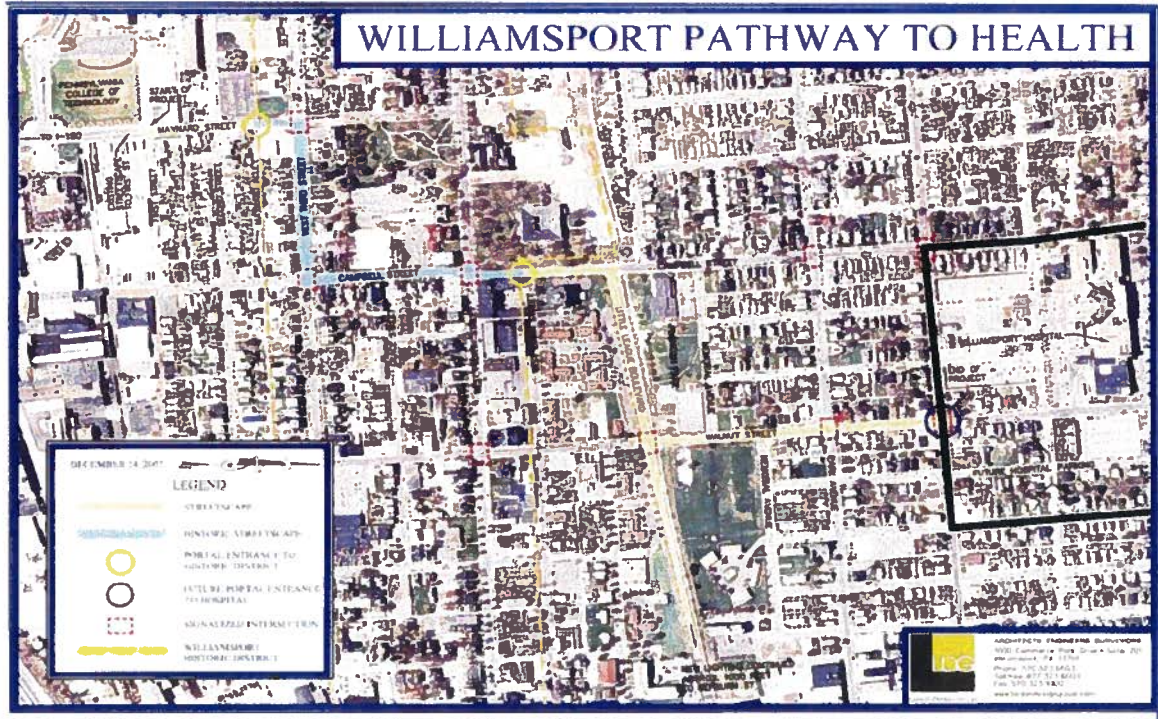
dramatic recent increases in carloads attributed to hauling frac sand and piping needed by the natural gas industry. In terms of capital investments, the Joint Rail Authority receives funding from federal, state and local sources primarily through PennDOT, PA DCED and the US Department of Transportation. Their latest capital budget adopted in August, 2009 shows a 2009 capital investment of about \$ 250,000 along the LVRR. Additional capital investment needs along LVRR to properly maintain the system, address safety and add siding capacity to capture emerging economic development opportunities amount to approximately \$ 1.5 million during 2010-2012. A great local example of conversion of an abandoned housing site to industrial development use is the Kennedy-King Manor Project near the Newberry Rail Yard whereby a PennDOT Rail Freight Assistance Grant and a State Community Revitalization Grant are paying the cost of providing a 1,100 foot rail siding to serve a nine acre site being developed by Moran Industries. We are exploring other possible rail served sites at the Muncy Industrial Park and Clinton Township industrial area. Our MPO continues to support additional federal and state investment in rail freight infrastructure as a multi-modal and economic development strategy.

TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENTS FUNDING NEEDS

PATHWAY TO HEALTH



The Williamsport Pathway to Health Project provides community improvements and enhancements which support the \$250 million public- private investment in Susquehanna Health's Rural Avenue Campus Expansion in the City of Williamsport. Traffic circulation and streetscape improvements tied to the new hospital campus entranceway are in the design stages. The Lycoming County Commissioners traveled to Washington DC this February requesting \$4.0 million in federal funding for the project. In June 2008, this project was presented to and favorably received by representatives of six Departments of state government. A Secretary-level summit is being planned soon.



We have also completed a feasibility study of completing the trail system throughout Lycoming County that would provide connections between the Pine Creek Rail Trail in Jersey Shore Area and the Williamsport Riverwalk, Lycoming Creek Bikeway, Loyalsock and Montoursville Bikeways with other links to the Muncy-Hughesville and Montgomery Areas. Approximately \$ 13 million in additional transportation enhancement funds along with PA DCNR funding would be needed to complete these connections and the current level of funding is woefully inadequate to accomplish such a task. We support increased levels in federal enhancement and PA DCNR funding to complete a regional trail system.



SUMMARY

Although we are in the midst of a severe economic recession with a 9% plus unemployment rate, there is reason for some optimism with the emerging natural gas drilling activity and recent announcements of significant job producing development.

One highlight is the recent announcement by the Arcadia Properties proposing a 2 million square foot distribution center near the I-180 Lycoming Mall Road Interchange that could potentially create over 600-1,000 good paying jobs.

Many significant projects long in the planning stages are either coming to fruition or have just been completed. Eventually the economy will turn around and we want to be poised to capture the economic opportunities within our region. Funding is critically needed to ensure system preservation and to make needed upgrades. We urge our federal and state elected officials to make every effort **NOW** to address this transportation funding crisis as part of SAFETEA-LU reauthorization and Act 44. We fully support funding and implementation of the remaining projects on our TIP and Long Range Plan approaching \$ 1 billion worth of needs during the next 20 years.

Toward this end, we have reviewed the State Transportation Advisory Committee Transportation Funding Study Report and do acknowledge that there is a menu of transportation revenue options that is available for consideration; however, many of these options offer low revenue yields and may not prove effective in adequately addressing

the magnitude of this crisis. As a result, we believe the General Assembly should take a serious look at increasing the PA Motor Fuel Tax to provide a substantial amount of the revenue needed.

This revenue source is a “user fee” and is the backbone of our existing process we use in PA to fund transportation. An 8 cent increase in this user fee would yield about as much as the anticipated revenue from Tolling I-80 and would at least help to manage the crisis until a more comprehensive revenue package can be developed. We strongly believe indexing this fee annually by 1 or 2 cents would also help to provide a more timely response to increasing costs and inflationary trends. These inflationary occurrences have been a real problem with the current rate remaining unchanged since 1997. Indexing can help to sustain our transportation maintenance and preservation program and avoid political paralysis in properly responding to inflationary trends. Raising the ceiling on the Oil Company Franchise Tax and removing the State Police costs from the Motor License Fund should also get serious examination now as other high revenue yield strategies. Tolling I-80 should be removed from further consideration given the negative impacts to our regional economy and the third federal rejection of this proposal by both Republican and Democratic Presidential Administrations.

Although we support the “*maintenance first*” philosophy toward management of our transportation system, it should not be “*maintenance only*”. We believe it is both prudent and in the public interest to make targeted investments to improve, expand and interconnect our multi-modal system based on sound planning and meaningful public involvement. We need leadership now to provide the resources to meet this growing challenge and will do our part to partner with PennDOT and others to continue delivering results.

