

# Transportation

The Township road system consists of 28.32 miles of secondary roads that function as connectors to an extensive state road system that includes two primary highways, Route 522 and Route 35, and a network of secondary roads that literally crisscross the Township. The most important of these roads are SR 204, Middlecreek Road, Clifford Road, and Salem Road. Other state roads are Fair Oak, SR 1004, SR 2017, State School Road, Old Colony Road, and Greenridge Road.

## Route 522/Route 35

Highway traffic counts show that Route 522 is by far the most heavily traveled highway in the Township. On the western and central sections of Route 522, the most recent traffic count recorded by PennDOT was 8,800 vehicles per day. East of Salem Road, where this busy two-lane street intersects Route 522. The traffic count jumped from 8,812 to 12,783. This increase of almost 4,000 vehicles per day is created by employees at Selinsgrove Center. A significant percentage of the 1,200 employees use Salem Road to reach the Center everyday.

From both a truck and automobile perspective, Route 522 is a most important east-west artery, linking Snyder County with Mifflin, Huntingdon, and Centre Counties. It also connects most of the smaller municipalities in the County: Creamer, Beaver Springs, Beavertown, McClure, and Middleburg, the County seat. To the north, Route 45 performs a similar function in Union County while, on the

south, Route 35 acts as a secondary east-west highway in southern Snyder County. Route 522 eventually connects to Lewistown, in Mifflin County, while Route 35 terminates in Mifflintown.

Route 522, and to a lesser extent Route 35, afford easy access to jobs in western Snyder County and to the Mifflin County Industrial Park, near Lewistown. The same is true for eastbound traffic from western Snyder County which can access job sites along the Route 522 corridor, at the Susquehanna Valley Mall, the Route 11/15 commercial strip, Sunbury and adjoining communities. By contrast, transient traffic on Routes 11/15 which is heading westward tends to use more strategically located highways to the north and south of Snyder County, a practice that is not likely to change even with construction of the Routes 11/15 bypass.

From a trucking perspective, the Route 522 corridor has a number of bottlenecks, or limitations, that reduce its effectiveness as a freight corridor. They are as follows:

- Tight intersections and bridges in the Middleburg area that act as a deterrent to west bound truck traffic
- Lack of convenient access for southbound traffic which must take Clifford or Salem Roads to reach Routes 11/15
- Access to the north and westbound Routes 11/15 which is fairly direct but quite time-consuming due to the

heavily traveled commercial strip and high number of traffic signals

Traffic along Route 35 in Penn Township is approximately half that of Route 522: 4,706 vehicles per day as compared to 8,812 along Route 522 west of 18th Street. Due to the absence of commercial and industrial establishments along this highway, most of the traffic can be traced to short local destinations, principally small villages and rural residences, or to transient travel between Mifflintown and nearby communities to Selinsgrove and eastern Snyder County.

The traffic counts along this highway show a very erratic pattern. At the boundary of Penn and Washington Township the traffic count decreases from 5,843 to 4,706, reflecting the eastbound traffic that exits at Middlecreek Road. The count remains consistent at 4,706 until Route 35 intersects with Old Routes 11/15 which motorists use to reach Selinsgrove. At that point the daily count dips dramatically, from 4,706 to 1,555. The count increases, however, from 1,555 to 2,383 near the intersection with new Routes 11/15, primarily in response to the number of vehicles which travel south from Selinsgrove to access this major highway.

The significant spike in traffic is principally due to residential growth in Penn Township, the Selinsgrove Area Middle School complex and the fact that 18th Street creates a convenient link between Route 522 and University Avenue at the location of Susquehanna University. Traffic emanating from 18th Street can be expected to increase due to additional developments planned in the Township to the south and west of Harris Estates.

Given present and potential future traffic volumes, a new signal light at 18th Street and Route 522 would be an appropriate way to control traffic at this intersection, particularly at peak travel times. Already, the First National Bank has reported that many motorists use its parking lot to create a "back door" entry to 18th Street.

## **Routes 11/15 Bypass**

The new Routes 11/15 bypass will have an important impact on the Township even though it will not include a direct connection to Route 522, the Township's main commercial corridor. The nearest interchange will be north of Penns Creek at the point where the Routes 11/15 bypass presently terminates.

This interchange will enable truck traffic from the north to more easily access commercial destinations along Route 522. Northbound traffic originating from Route 522 will benefit as well. The advantage of this interchange from a timesaving perspective, however, will be mitigated by the fact that the new highway takes a wide loop through Monroe Township before reconnecting to Routes 11/15 just below Winfield.

The new highway interchange will not improve access for southbound traffic on Route 522; in fact, trucks and automobiles traveling south from Route 522 will be unlikely to use the new interchange north of Penns Creek because of added time and distance factors. This traffic will continue to use Clifford Road and/or University Avenue to connect to Routes 11/15 south of Selinsgrove.

## Driveways and Points of Access

Access to local roads is regulated by the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SLDO). Driveways are controlled through design and location. An effective SLDO, therefore, is an important part of transportation planning.

For safety, a destination should have a single, well-defined point of access. For any development, the objective is to limit the number of "curb cuts" to the smallest number possible. Consolidation of driveways should be a goal wherever possible.

For access to state roads, developers must obtain an occupancy permit from PennDOT, a requirement that applies to individual driveways as well. PennDOT could allow the Township to review the project and provide input prior to issuance of the highway occupancy permit. Penn Township should contact the PennDOT District Office and request this privilege.

PennDOT has limited grounds for denying an access permit, based on sight and drainage standards. Local officials, however, often have additional information about the site and developer. For example, the Township might suggest a common drive for two adjoining tracts that are about to be developed.

Driveways, whether accessing Township or State roads, must be controlled for the good of the community. Points of access along strip developments, for example Route 522, can sometimes be dangerous or, at the least, confusing. Land

use ordinances should contain provisions which address such situations.

## Pedestrians and Bikers

The Municipalities Planning Code was amended to include pedestrian systems and bikeways as required elements of the Transportation Plan.

Communities need to have "walkability." Sidewalks and footpath easements in residential developments add to the quality of life and increase safety. Walking and biking are increasingly popular, as reflected in the trend toward Rails to Trails and linear greenways.

"Traffic calming" is a concept that refers to slowing vehicles in populated areas. The goal is to make streets inviting and safe for pedestrians and bicyclists. "Slowing down" is to be encouraged, particularly in residential areas. How?

- People drive faster on wider pavements. For built up areas, therefore, wider may not be better.
- Shade trees have a calming effect. In some cases, landscaping can be regarded as a speed control measure. Street trees also promote safety for walkers if planted between the cartway and sidewalk.
- Gateways are entrances to villages and boroughs. This is where vehicles should reduce speed. Trees can be used for this purpose and are known as "gateway plantings."

- Sidewalks and footpaths are desirable wherever feasible. Paths that connect residential areas with schools and parks benefit all ages.

## Impact Fees

Infrastructure improvements will be required with growth. The Township's two-lane rural road network, for example, was designed to handle limited traffic. As traffic increases due to development, the Township should consider using impact fees to defray the cost of road improvements. This approach is particularly relevant since the Township intends to target development to existing residential clusters, thus requiring incremental infrastructure improvements.

The potential to develop a neighborhood center just to the west of Ridgeview Estates along Route 522 would be dependent in part on impact fees. The entrance to the "center" could actually be an extension of 18th Street which divides Penn Township from the Borough of Selinsgrove. Due to heavy traffic at Route 522 and 18th Street, a dedicated entrance and traffic signal would be needed to accommodate such a development. Some of this impact also could be borne by increased development to the east along 18th Street. The proposed new Whitebriar residential development and a proposed new nursing home will generate additional traffic at this three-way intersection.

Impact fees are authorized by Act 209 and Article V of the Municipalities Planning Code (MPC). The Act permits municipalities to assess developers for part of transportation capital improvement costs related to their developments. These fees are intended to defray the costs of capital

improvements attributed to the new development. The Township must demonstrate this linkage. The impact fee must relate to new traffic concerns resulting from new development and cannot be used to correct preexisting deficiencies.

## Benefits

The impact fee ordinance recognizes there is a direct relationship between land use and transportation capital improvements. Impact fees can lower municipal infrastructure installation costs or provide an alternative funding source for new capital infrastructure. Most importantly, these fees pass the cost for roadway improvements along to the new development and thus allocate costs proportionally among new property owners.

## Implementation

The Township must adhere to the demanding provisions of Act 209 in establishing the impact fee and fairly apportion the costs of all infrastructure improvements related to a development.

The Township can be reimbursed for costs associated with infrastructure planning studies by including those costs in the impact fees.

## Route 522: Appearance Standards

People form their impressions of a community based on the view from important highway corridors. Considering Penn Township's beautiful rolling farmland, attractive villages and small-scale residential developments, parts of Route

522 strike a most incongruous note. The roadside need not be unattractive.

Light industrial and warehouse buildings have demonstrated how they can be attractive and, with generous buffer yards, become compatible partners of residential and agricultural uses. The Ott Packaging building, at the entrance to Penn Township, is an example of how effective landscaping and contouring can make even a non-descript building look attractive.

It is often not the particular use or design that defines the appearance of a building or commercial enterprise, but rather the nature of landscaping, setback from the highway, and building height and scale in relation to adjoining structures. For example, in Penn Township, preservation of a hedgerow and its enhancement with native trees can be an important landscape concept.

Route 522 can be considered the entry to Penn Township since it literally cuts the Township in half, north and south. Visitors to the area form their first impression of the Township as they drive along this thoroughfare. It is also an important artery that contributes to the area economy and provides essential services.

From east to west along this highway there is an ascending order of commercial and light industrial users. At the eastern end of Route 522 small service establishments such as restaurants, bank, medical and dental offices, convenience store and car lots are the dominant uses, together with the VFW Club located in a former auction barn. (See Appendix for aerial photos of Route 522.)

The overall appearance of Route 522 leaves much to be desired. With the

exception of the First National Bank building at the intersection of 18th Street and Route 522, landscaping has not been used effectively to create an attractive environment for small commercial operations in the eastern sector of Route 522. Setbacks have been inconsistently developed over time and, where deep setbacks exist, the "front" buffer space often consists of an unattractive parking lot or crowded vehicle display area.

In terms of building placement, setback, landscaping or signage, there is no common scale or pattern that would create a coherent visual relationship among these properties.

Signage tends to be inconsistent, often inappropriately sited and of uneven quality. There are only a few billboards along this corridor and action to limit future billboards, both in terms of size and frequency, should be a major focus of the Township. A summary of existing conditions along Route 522; including front footage, landscaping and building use appears in the Appendix.

## Air Transportation

The Penn Valley Airport, located on 129 acres immediately north of Selinsgrove in Monroe Township, is an important regional transportation asset. Classified as a "general aviation facility," it comprises a single paved runway of 3,800' length and 75' width, medium intensity runway lighting, a terminal, several hangars and a maintenance facility. Services at the Airport include:

- major/minor repair
- hangar rentals



- tiedowns
- APU
- air taxi and charter
- flight instruction
- aircraft rentals
- published VOR approach

The nearest airports with paved runways and lighted approaches in the region are Bloomsburg Municipal Airport and Williamsport Regional Airport.

Penn Valley's Five Year Action Plan features significant upgrade and expansion. A new Terminal Building and Commerce Center will be constructed and the runway will be extended by 960'. The current phase involves acquisition of nine acres of undeveloped land to the north and aviation easements and engineering for a relocated Mill Road. Other improvements include new perimeter fencing, a new runway lighting system and rehabilitation of the existing runway.

Airport facilities are key to economic development. The upgrade and expansion of Penn Valley Airport will enhance the business and corporate climate of the entire region.

Two corporate hangars are located at the Airport. The Action Plan has identified the need for additional corporate hangars. The Central Susquehanna Valley Chamber of Commerce is an active booster of the airport and its long-term expansion. Support for aviation growth is also strong in the community as witnessed by local philanthropic money which is funding the new Terminal and Commerce Center.

According to the Economic Impact of Aviation Report, the financial output from on-airport tenants and general aviation visitors to Penn Valley Airport was \$1.8

million in the year 2000. Approximately 95% of this revenue was from sale of fuel and rental of hangars.

Business aircraft users are and will be key to the local and regional economy. Penn Township supports the improvements and developments at Penn Valley Airport.

## Railroads

Although passenger service is no longer available in Snyder County, rail lines are an important part of the regional transportation system for the movement of freight.

There have been significant changes in recent years in railroad ownership and the way freight is managed throughout the nation. Pennsylvania remains the "Key-stone State" when it comes to commercial rail.

The Norfolk Southern Railway crosses Penn Township and serves three customers between Kreamer and Shamokin Dam. Woodmode and the Shamokin Dam generator plant are the largest customers with freight commodities of wood/coal products respectively. The rail spur also serves the grain elevator in Penn Township.

Rail traffic along this line is decreasing, even though rail customers can ship to any point in the continental US. Norfolk Southern officials indicate they are looking for additional customers.

At least one railroad crossing would need to be upgraded if the Township were to see a significant increase in freight train traffic. In the interim, Penn Township supports the continued use and future growth of rail transportation in the area.

# *Transportation Recommendations*

- Control access to Township roads by enforcement of provisions in the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.
- Monitor local development that connects to State highways. Contact PennDOT and request the opportunity for review and comment by the Planning Commission for local Highway Occupancy Permit applications.
- Consolidate and minimize the number of driveways at every opportunity and encourage shared entries in commercial and larger residential applications.
- Provide for pedestrian safety by requiring sidewalks in larger land development and include such provisions in the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.
- Encourage biking and pedestrian linkages between residential and recreation areas, where feasible.
- Prepare a large-scale landscape plan for Route 522 utilizing the corridor maps in the Appendix.
- Present landscape/bufferyard concepts to building owners to show how a coherent landscaping plan can enhance both the Route 522 corridor and their own business.
- Emphasize the importance of hedgerows and trees to increase coherence of roadside development and agriculture areas.
- Eliminate the profusion of small signs at Clifford Road and Route 522 which affects the line of sight for motorists entering onto Route 522.
- Establish a vegetation standard for roadside commercial and warehouse buildings, since these structures do not have to create "curb appeal" to attract customers. A landscape standard can be established in the same way roadway construction standards have been adopted by the Township.
- Conduct a voluntary effort to upgrade existing landscaping along Route 522 as part of an organized public service campaign carried out by the Township. (Plan to be based on the overall landscaping plan prepared for this important corridor)
- Establish a coherent standard for signage in terms of size, height, location and general materials that will work as a unifying element along the Route 522 corridor and create a visual link to the adjoining agricultural landscape.

- Consider creating an annual award for businesses along Route 522 for the best improvement in landscaping, signage or building design.
- Limit future installation of large billboards which serve off-site advertising purposes and create visual clutter.