

## **Fayette County Public Participation Panel**

The goal of the Public Participation Panel<sup>1</sup> was to provide the State Transportation Commission with input into the twelve-year transportation plan process. It is vital to moving projects forward that are considered important to the residents of the County in cooperation with PennDOT District 12-0. The public expressed concern regarding traffic safety and mobility, as well as economic benefit to addressing concerns. The Public Participation Process helped identify the most important transportation needs to establish priorities based on broad public support.

To everyone, the first priority is completion of the Mon Fayette Expressway from Morgantown, West Virginia to Pittsburgh. This section will support an economic development initiative, not only for Fayette County, but for all of southwestern Pennsylvania. Key actors in this economic renaissance are the Fay-Penn Economic Development Council, the County OCED, and the Central Fayette Chamber of Business and Industry.

Other project priorities are identified as follows:

- A. SAMI and Betterment Projects were identified have been categorized as having safety and mobility issues and/or problems.
- Intersection at the Village of Chalk Hill – continuation of project to relocate the intersection of SR 40 and SR 2010 and install traffic signal. Needed due to tourist volumes (Ohio pyle and Chalk Hill).
  - SR 51 - Signalization of the intersection at the Village of Upper Middleton in Menallen Township from the existing flashing warning signal due to accident history and sight distance.
  - Entrance to the Franklin Commercial Park signalization in advance of development.
  - Mon-Fayette Expressway – Uniontown to WV several intersections identified for increased safety due to increased volumes, especially several intersections in Georges Township.
  - Betterment Projects (Public Testimony).
- B. **Bridge Projects**
- C. **Public Transit** currently is served by limited fixed route system plus Shared-Ride Program, Medical Assistance Transportation Program, Special Events Transportation, Designated Stop, and twice a day to Pittsburgh. Due to lack of transportation services, many residents after finding job placement are having difficulty maintaining employment. Fayette Area Coordinated Transportation (FACT) is working to revitalize pre-existing routes and expand current fixed-route service to meet these needs. FACT focused on expanding four of the County's existing fixed-routes. Brownsville to Republic, Brownsville to Uniontown, Hopwood to Uniontown to Laurel Mall, Uniontown Circle Route and Phillips to Uniontown. The goal of FACT is to coordinate the current shared ride system with a fixed route bus system. To provide accessible transportation to those who do not qualify for shared-ride but live off the route of fixed ride. The intent is to expand and revitalize service routes to the areas of highest poverty to give access to employment opportunities that would not exist without public transportation.

D. Intermodal Transportation

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the Fayette County Public Participation Panel, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, District 12-0, State Transportation Hearing, Oral and Written Testimony (October 29, 1999).

1. **Airways** were indicated as a necessary component of the economic recovery of Fayette County. The current Connellsville Airport cannot accommodate corporate aircraft or commercial flights. It is the only hard surfaced airport with instrument approach in the County, and is centrally located to Uniontown and Connellsville. The runways need to be extended to accommodate additional aircraft.
2. **Rail Transportation** was discussed. Fay-Penn acquired 65-mile corridor from CSX in 1995 when deemed unprofitable. It was not properly maintained prior to acquisition. Current maintenance of a 26-mile section includes required rehabilitation of four road crossings deemed as safety hazards, 10 miles of track between Uniontown and Smithfield, replacement of warning signs, rehabilitation of CSX Dawson road crossing, construction of 2 passenger terminals, installation of turnarounds for passenger service, and upgrades to 12 miles of track for passenger service.

#### E. **Enhancements**

The Sheepskin Hike/Bike Trail connects the Youghiogony River Trail with the WV Rail Trail System. A Feasibility Study completed by Mackin Engineering recommends building in stages due to length (32 miles long). Uniontown to Ohiopyle (12 miles) will be the least costly to construct since only two landowners are involved. The Spur Trail from Smithfield to the Monongahela River at Huron near Ronco (11 miles) will pass through the historic community of Shoaf, which is on the National Registry of Historic Places and Lardin House Inn built in 1823. The Sheepskin Trail will provide health and physical fitness opportunities, community involvement, regional attractiveness, and meeting the national goal of "a trail within 15 minutes" of every American.

#### F. **Capital Projects**

1. **Route 21** - Widening of Route 21 to a four-lane highway. This is the most dangerous highway in PennDOT District 12 in the twelve miles from Uniontown to Masontown Bridge there are many road changes, no turning lanes, the crossroads pose a daily hazard, there are no defined driveways for businesses and residences. There are concerns with Hatfield Power Plant U-turns and the safety of the Albert Gallatin School District Elementary School access. Traffic congestion is noted at intersection of Route 21 and Matthew Drive. Truck traffic accounts for 11% of the average daily traffic of 15,103 vehicles and traffic will continue to increase upon the completion of the Mon-Fayette Expressway. There are fatal accident and speeding concerns.
2. **Route 711** – A Safety and Congestion Study of Route 711 from Connellsville at Route 119 southeast into Somerset County and to Johnstown. The first two miles is "Main Street" East Crawford Avenue. Route 711 is the primary access to tourist attractions in the Laurel Mountains. Route 711 has not seen any type of upgrade in the last 70 years. Economic activity including limestone, timber, and tourism is constrained by inadequacies of Route 711. The roadway carries 16,000 vehicles a day, of which 2,500 are heavy trucks and buses hauling resources and 200 are school buses. Deficiencies include steep grades, sharp curves, inadequate lane and shoulder widths, no runaway truck ramps, and no temporary pulloffs or safety features. Route 711 covers 4 miles in which the road rises 2000 feet in elevation while the entire stretch is a no passing zone. Heavy truck traffic is expected to increase 10% per year. The Northern Fayette County Transportation Alliance is promoting an engineering study of Route 711.

3. **SR 4020, SR 4003** – These roadways will provide access to new correctional facility in Luzerne Township. An estimated \$3 million in the secondary development is projected including commercial as well as residential development. The proposed Mon-Fayette Expressway interchange is located about five miles from the site of the correctional facility. S.R. 4020 (Heistersburg Road) will be one of the main access roads to the new correction facility and to the industrial areas near the river from the east. A one-mile portion from S.R. 4022 to the correctional facility site is very narrow and curvy. The roadway will need to be widened, resurfaced and have shoulders installed. S.R. 4022 from the Brownsville Borough line to S.R. 4020, East Fredricktown Road, is a narrow two lane road five miles long, the surface and shoulders are deteriorated, and drainage is poor. S.R. 4022 will also require widening and resurfacing with shoulders constructed, guiderail installed, and reflectors installed to aid visibility during fog conditions. Initial improvements of SR 4020 and SR 4003 are estimated to be \$5 million.
4. **US 40** - Improvements are needed for US 40 at US 119 Interchange located at South Union Township, and North Union Township. The Mon-Fayette Expressway is expected to change travel patterns and traffic volumes at U.S. 40 and U.S. 119 Interchange. U.S. 40 should be widened to provide adequate turning lanes for existing traffic and new traffic. Construction of a ramp system would alleviate weaving and ensure safety and mobility of motorists. This would improve access to 300 acres of vacant land within North and South Union Township and create hundreds of needed jobs for residents and to the Uniontown Mall that employs 1,500 employees. Currently the interchange does not provide sufficient space for stacking of vehicles along U.S. 40. The development of the Fayette County Industrial Park is expected to change travel patterns and increase the number of vehicles on the local road system. The industrial park and associated residential areas are projected prior to completion of the Mon-Fayette Expressway. Costs of improvements have been estimated at \$1.25 million for engineering, \$500,000 for right-of-way acquisition, and \$8 million for construction.

Widening of U.S. 40 to five lanes from U.S. 119 to an upgraded Duck Hollow Road was also identified. The Matthew Drive extension of approximately 3,500' through the Industrial Park to form connection with Duck Hollow Road would serve as a connection from Mon-Fayette Expressway to existing businesses at a projected cost of \$3.55 million. This would connect New Salem Road, Route 21, and U.S. 119 directly with the Expressway and serve as direct access to the Fayette County Industrial Park.

New Salem Road is also functioning at a deficient level of service and must be widened to four lanes from U.S. 40 to Matthew Drive to provide connections from U.S. 40 to residential and retail development. Construction of new turning lanes and traffic signals is required for a total cost of improvement of \$1.45 million. The total project cost is \$9.15 million for U.S. 40, New Salem Road, and Matthew Extension.

5. **TR 601, TR 603 and TR 360** - Upgrading portions of **TR603** and **TR360** and relocation portions of **TR 601** are projected to provide access from the industrial sites to the interchange of the Mon Fayette Expressway. This would provide access to Maxwell Lock and Dam, Matt Canestrале Coal Loading Facility, Consol Loading Facility, Wilhelm and Kruse and the new correctional facility. The existing roads are inadequate to provide access to a large Keystone Opportunity Zone site near the Gans Road exit to Mon Fayette Expressway. Projected cost is \$1.3 million.