
HARRIS TOWNSHIP

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The Harris Township Board of Supervisors met with the Potter Township Board of Supervisors on October 4, 2022 to hear the concerns of our residents related to the State College Area Connector Project. The Harris Township Board of Supervisors offers the following comments on the PEL study and the proposed alignments that are moving forward for further environmental review.

Roadway Design

As it stands now, there are no winners with the three alignments that are moving forward. Residents will lose their homes and their livelihoods. Farms will be lost. The unique rural character of our area will be forever altered.

While we acknowledge the safety issues that exist along the Route 322 corridor, we are opposed to using a limited access super highway to address these concerns. We fail to see how the proposed super highway will accomplish any of the stated safety goals for this project - lower speeds and safer highway design.

We urge PennDOT to reconsider the design of this roadway. Instead of a limited access super highway, we urge you to design a context sensitive roadway. To us, that means a four-lane divided highway with minimal medians, roundabouts or other left hand turn alternatives and, most importantly, a reduced speed limit through the corridor.

We point to the Route 41 project in Chester County. Route 41 is a 22-mile-long highway in southeastern Pennsylvania that connects Lancaster to Wilmington, Delaware. Route 41 runs along a two-lane undivided road called Gap Newport Pike, passing through mostly rural areas of Chester and Lancaster Counties. The roadway and the area have many similarities to the Route 322 corridor.

In the Route 41 project, PennDOT backed off of earlier plans to install a limited access super highway and instead is moving forward with a context sensitive design that incorporates roundabouts and other safety features.

If roundabouts and context sensitive design can be used in other parts of Pennsylvania, why is it not being considered here?

Methodology

We continue to question the methodology that is being used in this project. We've repeatedly asked that the Centre Region's Climate Action Goals and the state's Climate Action Plan be considered as part of the process. We've been told that these items will be considered during the environmental review. It is flawed and contrary to good planning to not consider these impacts now.

Similarly, we continue to question why this project is being planned in a vacuum. The US 15 bypass project and other projects in the state will affect truck traffic traveling through our area. Why are these projects not being considered as part of the planning process?

We also question the weight that will be assigned to the impacts noted in the PEL study. How will impacts to residents, businesses and agricultural land be weighted?

If PennDOT is so confident in the results of the PEL, why won't you show your work? Greater transparency is needed to improve the public's confidence in the state's ability to plan and build the appropriate roadway for our area.

Timeline

We urge PennDOT to consider the residents, businesses and farmers along this corridor who now must live in limbo while the project proceeds to environmental review. These residents are unable to make decisions about their homes, businesses and farms until PennDOT makes a decision on the roadway alignment. Property values are being impacted while PennDOT makes everyone play a waiting game. For the good of our community, we urge you to be transparent, to communicate with impacted residents and to move forward in a timely fashion.