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The latest news and Information from PennDOT Connects' network of people and places

PennDOT Connects October 2022 Newsletter

PennDOT Connects In Action
Success Story: Columbia Street Arch Bridge

Decades-old bridges carrying thousands of vehicles every day is an all-too-common story in Pennsylvania. Replacing or repairing bridges takes years of planning, financial resources, and work; and is often something small communities simply don't have the resources to tackle.

Built in 1921, the Columbia Street Arch Bridge (also known as the Old Stone Arch Bridge) in Schuylkill Haven Borough is more than just a historic bridge, it's a common artery in the borough for pedestrians, cars, and buses. With upwards of 10,000 vehicles crossing it each day, the bridge has begun to crumble and deteriorate.

Knowing time was against them, PennDOT scheduled a PennDOT Connects meeting with Schuylkill Haven Borough officials in 2017, to begin the process of finding the best solution for the almost 100-year-old bridge. Through the PennDOT Connects process, borough officials were able to meet with PennDOT, the Schuylkill County Planning Commission, the NEPA MPO and other key participants to start the process of identifying the right solution for the Columbia Street Arch Bridge. Together, the borough and PennDOT reviewed the pros and cons related to building a new bridge or repairing the current one.

After further discussion, public input, and research, it was determined that the existing bridge needed to remain open during any sort of repairs or rebuilding for emergencies. If the bridge were to close, emergency access to borough residents would essentially be cut off.

By utilizing PennDOT Connects, PennDOT was able to conclude very early in the planning that keeping the Columbia Street Arch Bridge open during construction was the right thing to do for Schuylkill Haven Borough. This early determination will help PennDOT avoid unnecessary construction delays, costs, and engineering redesigns.

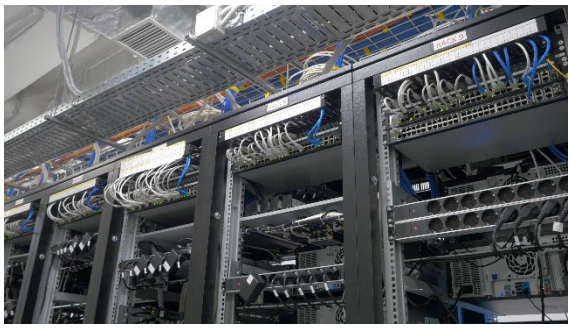
Based on the diligent work through PennDOT Connects, PennDOT awarded a contract for the work in spring 2022, with the project taking approximately two years to complete.

Visit the PennDOT Connects page on PennDOT's website to see how PennDOT Connects can work for you.

What is Crypto Mining?

By now many of us have heard of crypto mining, that is the process to create and validate new cryptocurrency coins (such as Bitcoin) using secure blockchain transactions. A blockchain is a virtual ledger which records transactions securely that cannot be modified or erased.

The 'mining' to create and validate new cryptocurrency is conducted in warehouses or even modified shipping containers that include large amounts of stacked computer servers. The 'miners' use the computer servers to compete with similar mining operations around the world to solve complex mathematical problems. The miner solving the problem creates the block that is added to the blockchain.



How could crypto mining impact your municipality?

Crypto mining is energy dependent and creates heat. The generators and cooling fans used to keep the computers running can be noisy.

Depending on how the mining operation is configured, onsite generators to support power operations and the cooling fans create noise, similar to natural gas compression facilities. An example is in Ridgway Township, Elk County where property owners have likened the sound to a jet engine (The Allegheny Front, July 2022). Similar accounts are reported around the globe.

How can your municipality address potential crypto mining noise issues?

A municipality may want to address crypto mining noise through its land use regulations. If a municipality has zoning, such a facility would likely be in an industrial zone, reducing potential impacts to residential neighborhoods. If a municipality has no zoning but a Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO), site plan regulations could be updated. A municipality could also consider passing a noise control ordinance.

To decide the best solution for your community, contact your municipal solicitor to talk through the municipality's need to address crypto mining and the most appropriate way to do so. DCED's library of planning information, The Library (https://dced.pa.gov/library/?wpdmc=publications_and_documents) has resources on Zoning Planning Series #4 and Subdivision and Land Development Planning Series #8.

2023 State Hazard Mitigation Plan Update

The Commonwealth of PA, led by Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) representatives and contracted support (Michael Baker International) is updating the Pennsylvania State Hazard Mitigation Plan (PA HMP).

The PA HMP was last approved in 2018, and PEMA was approved for their Enhanced status mitigation planning program. The Commonwealth intends to continue to meet federal requirements and document the work completed by federal, state, local, nonprofit, and private sector partners, to keep the plan as an effective and actionable document.

While the current risk assessment notes that flooding, severe storms, hurricanes, and snow storms have historically caused the greatest hazard risk to Pennsylvania, population increases, industry shifts, technology advances, climate change, and other factors can alter the potential for new or increasing hazards. Additionally, the PEMA team continues to incorporate climate change analysis and equity considerations (per FEMA requirements, federal executive order, and industry best practices).

The update process is a stakeholder-driven, team effort to compile efforts underway and opportunities with regards to risk-informed decision-making as well as mitigation strategies and actions to reduce that risk.

Please visit https://www.pema.pa.gov/Mitigation/Planning/Pages/default.aspx to learn more about the plan update and to stay up to date on the planning process. Any questions can be directed to Ernie Szabo, State Hazard Mitigation Planner, erszabo@pa.gov or the Contracting Team, PAHMP2023@mbakerintl.com.

2023 State Hazard Mitigation Plan Forms Survey

We want to hear from you!

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is updating the 2023 State Hazard Mitigation Plan. Please let us know if there are people, documents, or other tools you think should be included in this planning process to help your agency support a more resilient future.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PAHMP2023

FREE Transportation and Land Use Planning – Assistance and Training

PennDOT Connects offers **free** assistance and training to municipalities to better integrate local land use development and transportation goals into the state transportation planning process.

Any municipal staff member, government official or planning partner is eligible to request **free** planning assistance or personalized training. Simply fill out the PennDOT Connects Training/Assistance request form by clicking here.

Do You Know Your MPO or RPO?

PennDOT and its Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Rural Planning Organization (RPO) partners have a long-standing relationship jointly preparing transportation studies, plans, and programs to make the best transportation project investments possible with available resources. This strategic alliance is now of even greater importance for PennDOT Connects implementation. Together, the MPO/RPO planning partners and PennDOT can effectively collaborate and communicate with municipalities — and other community stakeholders (e.g., transit operators, economic development agencies, etc.) — to improve transportation system performance and achieve more livable communities. The collaborative effort of municipalities, MPO/RPO planning partners, and PennDOT is key to ensuring that opportunities to improve transportation and communities are realized.

MPO/RPO contacts can be found here.

PennDOT Connects

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation is committed to bettering our transportation system and our communities through collaborative planning. We must find creative solutions to sustain and expand mobility throughout the commonwealth. This means improving our planning process to reflect changing demographics and technological innovation. We are broadening the benefits we deliver and taking a more holistic approach to planning. We are tasking PennDOT staff and our planning partners to consider community needs at the beginning of the planning process to ensure the best allocation of our resources. This approach, PennDOT Connects, will make our planning processes more efficient and cost-effective to the benefit of all Pennsylvanians. The full PennDOT Connects Policy (PDF) includes collaboration requirements and planning considerations, as well as the implementation timeline and more.

PennDOT Connects Newsletter

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

PennDOT Connects
Planning with our communities