

**May 7, 2009 Bridge Meeting  
Lower Frederick Township Building  
6:30 PM**

In Attendance:

Sen. Rob Wonderling  
Rep. Bob Mensch  
Chuck Davies, PennDOT  
Henry Berman, PennDOT  
John Markus, PennDOT  
Tom McIntyre, PennDOT  
Matt Miele, PennDOT  
Naryana Velaga, PennDOT  
Tamara Twardowski, Lower Frederick Twp. Mgr.  
Bill McGovern, Chairman, Lower Frederick Board of Supervisors

Ninety (90) Concerned Citizens (those who filled out cards) 100+ est. attendance

Senator Wonderling began the meeting at 6:30 PM by thanking all who came out to attend the meeting and especially those volunteers of the Fire and EMS community. He also recognized the township, and PennDOT representatives for their interest in the meeting.

Those in attendance were urged to fill out the registration cards in an attempt to keep everyone in attendance up to date on the progress of the projects being discussed tonight.

Senator Wonderling asked everyone to take a minute to read the prepared agenda (attached) and make recommendations for any additional issues pertinent to the discussion. Those items included: traffic routes for school buses, folk festival, access to the Tiki Bar, daily use, LGS evacuation and the effect on local businesses.

The Senator mentioned other areas of concern as being expediting; the construction and repairs, emergency response for police, fire and ambulance and the impact on the surrounding infrastructure (i.e. Schwenksville Borough and the intersection of Plank Road and Rt. 73).

Representative Bob Mensch welcomed the audience and asked for their cooperation and patience in solving mutual issues and also asked the audience be courteous to each other as this meeting might tend to have some personal issues presented.

Senator Wonderling introduced the guests from PennDOT (listed above) in addition to Ernie Schmitt, (Lower Frederick Township supervisor) and Ken Hagey (Upper Salford Township supervisor).

Mr. Chuck Davies started the presentation by mentioning the plans will be sent to the Construction Contract Division either Friday, May 8<sup>th</sup> or Monday, May 11<sup>th</sup>. He then introduced John Markus who started by reviewing the existing bridge followed by some details of the new bridge.

John mentioned the existing bridge is 202' in length and the new bridge will be 225' and the existing roadway is 18' wide between the barriers and 21" outside the barriers where the new construction will be 28' curb to curb and will have a 12' pedestrian bridge for the trail. The current construction schedule includes Invitation to Bid - May 14, 2009; Let Date - June 18, 2009; Contractor Proceed – August 3, 2009; and Scheduled Completion – October 29, 2010. The start to completion time for the contract is 14 months.

A resident asked why this project took so long to get to this stage since PennDOT originally started talking about the bridge 20+ years ago. Senator Wonderling discussed the availability of funding for such projects and Mr. Davies added there are legalities, clearances, design and administrative procedures which must be followed to ensure the funding will be approved. He also mentioned there will be incentive clauses and provisions in the contract to ensure a timely completion of the project.

Most of the residents voiced their opinion that they are “land locked” and feel they will be “living on an island” due to the construction of the Spring Mount Road bridge as well as the closing of the bridges on Salford Station Road. Discussion was held on which bridge should be dealt with first and Sen. Wonderling answered by stating that best solution is to continue with the plans for the Spring Mount Road bridge project because typically when a delay occurs funding tends to disappear.

Matt Miele discussed the traffic issues involved with the detour routes mentioning that included in the contract will be traffic signal timing changes and pre-emption devices to be installed at the intersections of Park Avenue & Rt. 29/73 and also at Perkiomen Avenue & Main Street, both in Schwenksville Borough.

Residents voiced their concerns about vehicles traveling south on Rt. 29 and attempting to turn left on to Park Avenue and also of the flooding of the roadway on Park Avenue during heavy rains. Mr. Miele reviewed with the audience “Plan B” of the detour route when and if flooding occurs which would be a travel route of South on Main Street, left on Rt. 73 and on to Haldeman Road. PennDOT encouraged the residents to submit other ideas and solutions for this concern. Signage was discussed and an entity chosen by the contractor will be responsible for changing the signs (either covering them or flipping them down) if the alternate route is to be used. The number of times the roadway floods per year was estimated to be 8-10.

One resident expressed his desire to see temporary repairs be made to the Salford Station Road bridges to help alleviate the anticipated traffic problems during the construction period of the Spring Mount Road Bridge. Henry Berman was introduced and addressed the audience by stating the deterioration of both of those bridges is so great, it far outweighs the risk of life and safety of the public. He further stated there are 29 repairs which would be required to be made before it would become usable. He stated PennDOT is working with the fact that temporary repairs will be far too expensive as the replacement cost is being estimated at \$4,000,000.

Concerns regarding the travel routes for the emergency services were discussed in length. The residents were assured by Bill McGovern that all citizens can expect the same emergency care on a timely basis as they have at the present time.

Scott Angstadt, Chief of the Lower Frederick Fire Company mentioned his company and others have not used the Spring Mount Road bridge since the weight restrictions were lowered and all appropriate adjustments for back-up companies have been made as well as other contingency plans in case of emergencies. His back-up/assisting agencies include but are not limited to Upper Salford Fire Company, Schwenksville Fire Company, Upper Frederick Fire Company, and Perkiomen Fire Company. He stated his responses will be adjusted by the day of the week and the time of day of the emergency.

Mr. Tom McIntyre discussed the work PennDOT was doing for the emergency services which include the installation of pre-emption devices, traffic signal improvements, improved traffic flow and possible parking improvements in Schwenksville Borough.

Mr. McGovern continued his discussion with the use of the "orphaned" bridge on the trail. This usage was discussed as an additional solution since the back-up units for ambulance service provided by Lower Frederick Regional Ambulance are Green Lane Ambulance (BLS provider) and Harleysville Ambulance (ALS provider).

Traveling over this bridge would be to the first road and that would put the unit at Clemmers Mill Road. Questions were brought up as to the weight capacity of the bridge, the width of the structure vs. the width of the ambulance and the structural integrity of the bridge. Mr. McGovern advised in his discussions with Montgomery County the county will have their engineer look into these issues.

An offer was made to house an ambulance at the Upper Salford Township maintenance garage with a full crew. Matt Wells, Chief of Lower Frederick Ambulance submitted to Mr. McGovern a proposal as to what it would cost to staff this additional crew. The Senator will take charge of the ambulance/paid staff issue. Andrew Calhoun (paid part-time paramedic with Lower Frederick Ambulance and paid full-time paramedic with Harleysville Ambulance) addressed the audience explaining the distance response with the use of Harleysville covering the calls on the Upper Salford side of the project.

The matter of inclement weather was discussed and Lower Frederick Township officials offered to maintain the trail bridge area as to plowing and salting if this route was accepted. It was noted the Lower Frederick ambulances are equipped with drop-down chains.

Other suggestions and comments from the audience regarding ambulance service included the difficulty of unlocking the locks in freezing weather, the possibility of housing an ambulance and crew in the Schwenksville Borough area (possibly at the Water Authority building or old Police Department structure) and the possible temporary elimination of the bollards at the trail bridge.

Chief Maxey, Lower Frederick Police Department, addressed the group to assure that he has the complete cooperation of his department along with that of the Pennsylvania State Police to ensure continued complete and uninterrupted service and coverage to the public. He asked for the public to be cooperative in their effort to continue providing the community with good service.

**Questions from the public were answered as follows:**

- Q. Regarding the infrastructure – can it handle the additional traffic which is expected and does PennDOT have money budgeted for repairs to these roads once the construction project is completed?**
- A.** *Senator Wonderling advised his office will work on this issue and stated that unfortunately the budget is not sufficient at this time.*
- Q. Can a lock be put on the Salford Station Road Bridge for the ambulances to use in an emergency?**
- A.** *Mr. Berman advised this would not be feasible as the structure is deemed as unsafe for any travel.*
- Q. Will the intersection of Spring Mount Road and Clemmers Mill Road remain open?**
- A.** *Mr. Miele answered the intersection will remain open at all times unless the contractor needs to close it temporarily for the movement of equipment or materials.*
- Q. If I have a medical emergency at my residence and I prefer to use Grand View Hospital will the construction project have any influence on where I am treated?**
- A.** *Mr. Calhoun replied that the hospital will be chosen depending on the type of illness as the closest hospital is the appropriate choice but every attempt will be made to accommodate your request.*

- Q. Can a military type bridge be used to alleviate detours?**  
**A.** *Mr. Davies relied by stating it would not be an appropriate structure and PennDOT cannot build a structure on property it does not own.*
- Q. This detour and construction project will make it impossible for me to get to my job in Colmar. How can you help me?**  
**A.** *Senator Wonderling and Representative Mensch assured the resident they would look into a solution to his problem.*
- Q. How will this project affect the Limerick Generating Station (LGS) evacuation plans and why can't we have them shut down completely until this roadway is open again?**  
**A.** *Both the Senator and Representative will be contacting the NRC and PECO/Exelon.*
- Q. How will the volunteer responders get through the traffic congestion to respond to their respective stations in case of an emergency?**  
**A.** *Mr. Calhoun advised the ambulance is staffed 24/7 (with the exception of officers) at their building and Mr. Angstadt stated that most of the volunteers associated with the fire company reside in Spring Mount.*
- Q. Will emergency responders have any delay in responding to public/private schools?**  
**A.** *On the advice of Mr. Angstadt, Mr. Calhoun and Chief Maxie all stated there would be no delay.*
- Q. Mr. McGovern asked what was being done regarding parking on Main Street in Schwenksville Borough.**  
**A.** *Mr. Miele advised he is working with Schwenksville Borough officials on this issue.*
- Q. A resident asked if there will still be flooding once the new structure is in place on Spring Mount Road.**  
**A.** *Mr. Markus responded in the affirmative further stating there is a 10' – 15' difference between Lower Frederick and Upper Salford and PennDOT is not allowed to level the ground.*
- Q. Was the original bridge built on a flood plain?**  
**A.** *Representative Mensch answered that it probably was but when the bridge was originally constructed in 1869 it wasn't called a flood plain.*
- Q. Is it possible to have an extended green arrow installed S-bound on Rt. 73 at Park Avenue.**

**A.** *Mr. Miele answered by stating the traffic lights will be adjusted for the time of day and the day of the week. He further stated that PennDOT feels at this time the money for this project is better spent on the construction phase and not on the pre-engineering.*

**Q.** **Regarding our schools and school buses, will they be appropriately notified?**

**A.** *Senator Wonderling answered that this would be addressed by both his office and Representative Mensch's office.*

**Q.** **Have the organizers of the Philadelphia Folk Festival been notified of the construction project?**

**A.** *Mr. Tim Hasson advised that they have been notified and feel confident this will have minimal impact on their event. Another resident spoke up stating her son is involved with Community Relations of the Folk Fest Society and they feel traffic patterns will be self adjusted to meet the needs of those attending.*

**Q.** **Another resident asked if Lower Frederick Fire Company will still be able to have their fundraiser Pancake Breakfast that weekend.**

**A.** *Mr. Angstadt advised the members of the fire company are working on the logistics of this issue.*

**Q.** **If Lower Frederick Ambulance decides to accept the offer of space in Upper Salford Township will the old trestle bridge be re-opened?**

**A.** *Senator Wonderling stated he would look into this but it probably would not be re-opened.*

**Q.** **There will be several local businesses/enterprises affected by this project. Will there be directional signs provided?**

**A.** *Matt Miele advised that those who are directly affected will be listed (Road Open to:). As a matter of information; it is believed to be six (6) businesses and that list will be forwarded to Mr. Miele.*

**Q.** **How will these businesses be advertised as open?**

**A.** *Mr. Hasson responded by offering to list these businesses on his website as well as any other pertinent information and progress. Updates will be made as necessary.*

**Q.** **A resident asked if a foot bridge to be used by pedestrians could be build first.**

**A.** *Mr. Markus responded by stating the project is planned to be done all at once not in phases and consideration must be given due to a gas line running under the bridge which needs to be maintained. Mr. Davies reminded the audience that additional little projects will cause additional time to be added to the project completion date. Senator Wonderling also stated that additional projects involve additional permits, land acquisition, etc.*

**Q. Would it be possible to use a temporary span such as what was used on Airy Street in Norristown near the Times Herald building?**

**A.** *Mr. Berman responded that this might possibly work but questioned the feasibility.*

**Q. Will the trail usage continue to be limited to non-motorized vehicles?**

**A.** *Representative Mensch answered by stating this is county owned land and his office will get an answer.*

**Q. There is a sharp turn traveling South on Rt. 29 just north of Ortino's (Park Avenue). Can the painted stop line be moved back to accommodate the turning larger vehicles from Park Avenue) such as tractor trailers and fire vehicles?**

**A.** *Mr. Miele stated PennDOT will look into moving the stop bar line and adjusting the timing of the light. Senator Wonderling commented there is a common theme of traffic back-up issues and Mr. Miele reiterated that adjustments will be made as warranted.*

**Q. How will the public be notified of the detour routes?**

**A.** *This will be listed on Legislative Websites, Mr. Hasson's website, PennDOT's website and will be forwarded to local municipalities as well as businesses/enterprises for their inclusion to their websites.*

**Q. Regarding the economic impact on these businesses, is there financial help available?**

**A.** *Senator Wonderling will look into this and his office will offer any help which is available.*

**Q. Who has the final say on the traffic light situation in Schwenksville Borough?**

**A.** *Mr. Miele answered by stating that if it is not a PennDOT project then they will work in conjunction with the municipality and if it is a PennDOT project they are able to suggest changes.*

**Q. When can we expect a response to the temporary span at Salford Station Road?**

**A.** *Mr. Berman will have an answer in one week (by 5/15/2009).*

**Q. If more money was available for this project could it possible expedite the construction time?**

**A.** *Mr. Davies responded by stating that the processes must still proceed as planned and the end result is not to lose the funding that is available.*

**Q. Returning to the suggestion of a temporary bridge, is it a solution?**

**A.** *Mr. Berman spoke about the foundation problems which currently exist and a temporary structure would cost \$300,000 - \$500,000, therefore it is not cost effective. Representative Mensch reminded those in attendance that while a temporary span might seem like a good solution, it should be remembered that there are probably 101 reasons it would fail and suggested the community keep everything in perspective.*

- Q. Is it possible to have a trial run of the detour route?**  
**A.** *Mr. Miele suggested the route run as planned for about a week and then make adjustments. Another idea for the intersections might be manual control and PennDOT could possibly allocate funding for this.*
- Q. How often will the adjustments be made?**  
**A.** *Mr. Miele stated that PennDOT will oversee the work in general, and the contractor will designate who will actually make the adjustments and at what frequency.*
- Q. Does PennDOT have a contingency plan if the contractor goes out of business or just walks away from the project and how will it affect the completion date?**  
**A.** *Senator Wonderling offered the following response. This procedure is covered in the contract and with the bonding company. PennDOT is ultimately responsible.*
- Q. Have all permits and right-of-ways been obtained?**  
**A.** *Mr. Davies assured the audience everything is in order.*
- Q. Will there be another meeting?**  
**A.** *Senator Wonderling will be scheduling another meeting and every attempt will be made to have someone from the county in attendance.*
- Q. Can PennDOT assure the bridge will be closed for the least amount of time?**  
**A.** *Mr. Davies advised that this will be accomplished with good pre-planning on the part of the contractor.*
- Q. Will there be night-time operations?**  
**A.** *Mr. Davies related this is not a good idea as some residents might object.*
- Q. Is it possible for Mr. Berman to provide a written progress report on the Salford Station Road Bridge?**  
**A.** *Mr. Berman will prepare a report.*
- Q. Has a drainage study been done to address the flooding situation on the Lower Frederick side of the bridge?**  
**A.** *Mr. Davies stated the topography and other related studies have been done and the solution to the problem is too major to be done.*

**General Comments**

Mr. McGovern commented the fire company has a good regional response plan and everyone should feel assured there will continue to be good service.

Mr. McGovern is still not comfortable with the answer he was given regarding the temporary bridge over the dip in the road on Park Avenue and he wants to look into it further.

Mr. Angstadt feels the time the area is affected is minimal maybe 1 hour in the morning and 2 hours in the afternoon/evening. Many residents disagreed with his assessment and PennDOT will look into this matter.

**The Action Items from the meeting are as follows:**

1. Lower Frederick resident Ken Yesvinsky will determine what private schools are affected by the bridge closure and what plan they have in place to address the issue. The public schools are working with the local municipalities on alternate routes, if needed.
2. Senator Wonderling will determine the 2010 PennDOT Maintenance Schedule.
3. Senator Wonderling & Representative Mensch will work with the Borough of Schwenksville to explore the parking situation on Main Street so that emergency responders can get through congested areas.
4. Matt Miele of PennDOT will work to put in a left hand turn signal or possible manual assistance during peak periods at Rt. 29 & Park Ave. /Game Farm Road
5. Senator Wonderling and Representative Mensch will work to include incentives and penalties in the contractors contract to ensure the bridge is built with the utmost expediency.
6. Senator Wonderling and Representative Mensch will work to try and find Jim Frey, 26 Church Road, Spring Mt., 610-662-1600, a ride to his job in Colmar.
7. Bill McGovern of Lower Frederick Township will follow-up with the county on emergency contingency plans to allow emergency vehicles to gain entry to the railroad bridge on the Perkiomen Trail. Also, if they will leave the path gate open during bridge construction for quick entry.

8. Henry Berman will determine if it is possible to put a military-type temporary bridge over the Salford Station Road Bridge.
9. Henry Berman will provide information as to where PennDOT is with regards to permits for the Salford Station Road Bridge.
10. Senator Wonderling and Representative Mensch will work with PECO and PennDOT to determine if sufficient emergency plans are in place in the event of a major disaster. Another meeting will be set up to address this issue.
11. Senator Wonderling will determine if assistance is available for businesses affected by the bridge closure.
12. Matt Miele of PennDOT will prepare signage for businesses so that residents know that the businesses are still open. Those to be advertised are on the Lower Frederick side Joe's Spring Mount Hotel, Cabin Craft and Joe's Pizza, on the Upper Salford side Spring Mount Ski Area, Tiki Bar and Justa Pizza.