

Alternate route planned for turn of the century

by Danielle M. Murphy
Collegian Staff

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) has made its recommendation for an east side highway to connect the Bayfront Parkway with Interstate 90. Of four routes under consideration, PennDOT has chosen Alternative Route 3 as its "Preferred Alternate."

"Alternative 3 was chosen by PennDOT and other resources because it best meets the project needs," said Karen Petit, PennDOT Public Relations.

"In terms of economic, social, design, and environmental considerations Alternative 3 best meets the project needs after two years of study," added Petit.

Alternative 3 follows the railroad corridor from the Bayfront area, intersects Wintergreen Gorge, follows a newly designed four-lane Station Road, and meets I-90.

As proposed, Alternative 3 intersects Behrend's campus at homeplate of the women's softball field. Designs for Alternative 3 are not final. PennDOT is identifying corridors for the route and not designing the actual roadway. Before actual construction begins, environmental impact studies must be completed and the route must receive Federal Highway Administration approval.

"These are only preliminary designs," said Petit.

"Once it's approved, which is expected by next year, we'll hire a consultant for the final design," added Petit.

Earliest possible dates for construction are near the end of the decade in 1998 or 1999.

According to PennDOT, estimated costs for Alternative 3 are over \$80 million and funding is not yet available. Of the original alternates, Alternative 3 is the most expensive because of bridge construction.

According to John Ream III, Director of Operations, "We're not going to see construction in the next four years. PennDOT is still refining as to the actual location of the road."

PennDOT's plans show Behrend's main campus entrance as being on Jordan Road with a traffic light at the intersection of Station and Jordan Roads. "There are advantages for Behrend," said Ream. "The entrance will be improved with the traffic signal. Also, there is a history of accidents on the roadway between I-90 and campus, this route will improve that connection."

"There will also be a better link into town," added Ream.

Penn State would receive compensation for any campus land used in construction of the roadway.

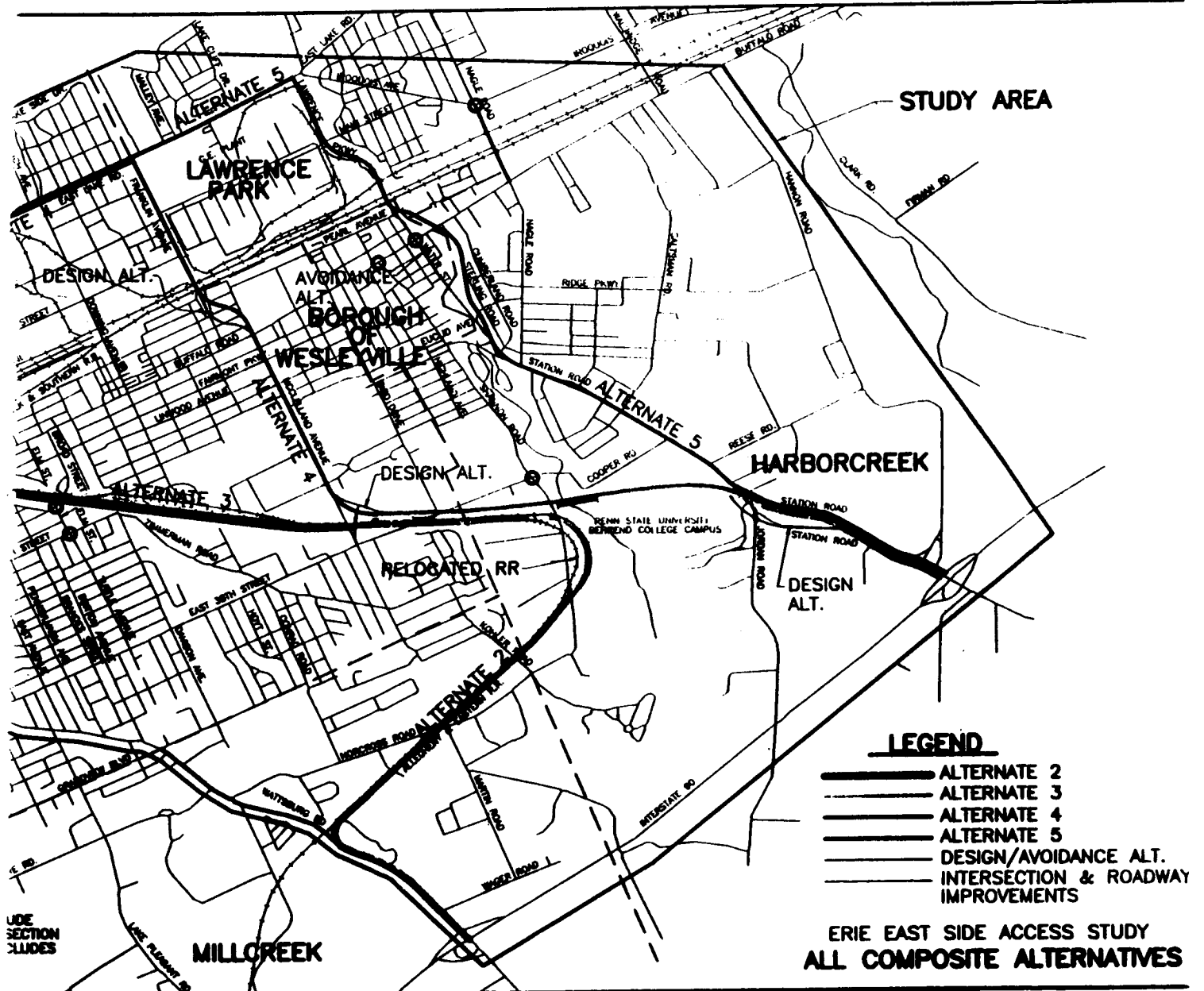
PennDOT chose Alternative 3 after conducting several studies and surveys over the past two years. PennDOT first established the need for an east side connector based on safety reasons, traffic congestion, and economic development. Environmental studies were also conducted to identify the best location for the route and an Environmental Impact Statement must be completed before the alternative receives final approval.

In a public opinion survey conducted during the fall among Erie residents, 58.6 percent chose Alternative 3 as the best route and the one that would cause the least amount of access problems for homeowners along the roadway. A majority of those surveyed felt Alternative 3 would open the most areas for economic

development.

Previous environmental studies showed that Alternative 3 would affect the least amount of floodplains, .25 acres. The alternative will affect 3.76 acres of wetlands, compared to 7.52 acres by Alternative 2 and less than three acres by Alternatives 4 and 5. Alternative 3 will require the displacements of 48 residences and businesses, the second lowest number among the original alternatives. Alternatives 4 and 5 would have required 95 and 122 displacements, respectively.

A construction date for Alternative 3 has not been set and PennDOT must still raise funds for the project if final approval is given. A public meeting will be held April 27 at 7 p.m. at Harbor Creek High School.



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Elections continue today

have to re-invent the wheel because they are already involved in SGA." Bennett said Miller and Woycheck would have to reinvent the wheel because they have not been very involved with SGA in the past.

Present Student Government Association President Sam Epps endorses the Buther/Keefe ticket as well.

"I think that Nicole and Tom, with their extensive experience with SGA and in dealing with

administration, are best suited to continue and build on the foundation established by the SGA this year. Their ideas to involve students more will fit in well with the direction SGA is already headed in," said Epps.

Other offices in the elections are the Resident and Commuter Senator positions. There are six Resident and eight Commuter seats available. SGA received only three petitions for Resident Senator and three petitions for Commuter Senator before the extended deadline. The six candidates will be elected to their respective seats as long as they each receive at least one vote in the election.

The three Resident Senators are: Melissa Barger, Roxzana Y. Kelly, and Sharain Naylor.

The three Commuter Senators are: John R. Anderson, Motillo, and Michael Anderson.

The remaining Senate seats will be filled next year in a manner determined by the Senate.

The remainder of the seats are filled by Council Presidents.

The individual Councils will hold their own elections to determine who will represent them to the Student Government Association.

As a reminder, students may have their voices heard by voting today between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. in the Science Building.