

Urban term Students Attend PennDOT Seminar

by Mike Dini

Recently, a group of students of the Urban Term attended a seminar at the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PENNDOT). They spoke with Mr. Louis Keefer, Director of Advanced Planning for the department.

Mr. Keefer cited the development of the department and the role his division plays relative to transportation in the Commonwealth. He stated that the Transportation Department covers a myriad of areas including: highways, mass transit, air, port and rail facilities, ecological and environmental problems and other related transportation concerns.

An important legislative guide to transportation in the Commonwealth, the 1962 Highway Act was noted as originating the present department from its predecessor the Pennsylvania Department of Highways. This new name for the department signifies the change and direction of the Commonwealth to all matters of transportation besides the area of highways. The Act also called for the establishment of transportation studies (i.e., the Harrisburg Area Transportation Study (HATS) which covers an area of about 50,000 people, of which there are eleven such areas in the Commonwealth. Other examples of the surveys include Philadelphia (the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Authority) and Pittsburgh (the Southwestern Regional Planning Authority).

The department has been developing a statewide highway planning program integrated with urban and aviation planning. Many areas are developing and planning regional airports (i.e., the Scranton-Wilkes-Barre Airport at Avoca). Rail planning is also a major concern of the department. It was noted that Pennsylvania's three major railroads are bankrupt. One suggestion was to urge the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) to prohibit further rail bankruptcies on environmental grounds.

Budgeting is a very important segment of the departmental program. PENNDOT subsidizes the Port of Philadelphia and Erie among others. The entire Department is responsible for an \$8 Million planning budget for the year. Some 20,000 PENNDOT employees manage 44,000 miles of the Commonwealth's 116,000 mile highway system. Mr. Keefer also pointed out that the Commonwealth has 32,000 secondary roads. Of major importance was the fact that the federal government does not fund the state for the maintenance of roads. The total system of highways in the Commonwealth is more than the total highway systems of the states of New York, New Jersey and all of the New England states combined. As a part of the Commonwealth Budget, transportation ranks with welfare and the biggest expenditure education. Transportation is definitely a major concern in the state and the nation.

Mr. Keefer also discussed planning at PENNDOT. He noted the cooperation of many diversified groups. These included the department's staff, professional consulting firms, interaction with federal, other state and local municipality governments and civic groups. He noted that there are special committees whose job it is to determine the need and feasibility of transportation goals, policies and objectives. These committees include: a Coordinating Committee of various state and local officials, a Technical Committee of state and local transportation professionals, a Local Government Advisory

Committee made up of local municipality officials and a Citizens Advisory Committee composed of publicly minded local individuals. These committees reflect the direction of transportation planning for their respective area or region.

A discussion topic centered around two areas which Mr. Keefer referred to as "systems planning" where the responsibility of the planners is a complete network or region over which they are responsible and "project planning" where a certain specific project falls under the domain of the District Engineer, (Harrisburg is under the direction of the District 8th Engineer).

A surprise to many of the students in attendance was a comment by Mr. Keefer that the present Secretary of PENNDOT, Mr. Jacob Kassab, had appeared at hearings in Washington where he advocated the breakup of the federal "Highway Trust Fund." This position seems to be gathering additional supporters, among them President Nixon.

A question and answer period followed during which time several transportation issues were raised. The recent developments of a creation of a Cumberland-Dauphin and Harrisburg Mass Transit Authority was discussed. Mr. Keefer noted that major problem with mass transit in Harrisburg or any other urban area was the fact mass transit could not sustain its heavy operating losses. The governmental problem was the inability or undesirability of local municipalities to subsidize operating losses of the mass transit companies.

It was also noted that the federal government has various formulae whereby federal and state funding of highways are determined. Currently the federal government subsidizes the construction of Interstate Highways by 90% to the states 10%. The federal government also subsidizes Non-Interstate Highways by 50% to the states 50%. A change may be forthcoming this summer when the 90-10 formula becomes 70-30.

Mr. Keefer states that political involvement and intrigue in highway development and construction and right-of-way is much less than the general public believes. He further pointed out that environmental impact statements are required by the federal and state governments to aid the development and planning of new highways relative to the impact these highways would have on the environment and the people which inhabit it. He spoke of travel corridors (strips of land about one half to one mile wide) where highways are planned due to high density transportation use.

The cost of regional and area urban studies has been about 2-4 dollars per person. These studies are generally conducted over a period of some five years. The recent Harrisburg Area Transportation Study cost approximately \$700,000. Mr. Keefer said he envisioned transportation planners as sort of "defacto" city planners, both working for specific areawide goals and objectives utilizing such information as land use surveys, employment figures, density of population figures, and other related topographical and geopolitical statistics.

One of the most important aspects of planning noted by Mr. Keefer was the impact the people have on transportation planning. It would seem that the public does have a voice in the needs of the city or regional area in which they reside. The Harrisburg River Relief Route is an example of this very fact. While discussing the affects of highways and their use, it was noted that vehicular travel increases rather closely with economical growth. Thus the

question, do highways go where people are or do people go where highways are?

An area which has recently received much public interest has been the question of an "Energy Crisis." The question of a possible shortage of fuel, minerals and metals has a great affect on the nation's (automobile) transportation industry and the affect it will have on the development of highways of the future. Has the American automobile industry gone overboard in its manufacture of "big" cars? Has the time come for a re-evaluation of our transportation priorities? Is mass transit the answer to many of our urban based transportation problems of the present and of the future? These are many of the questions which were discussed and continue to be discussed throughout the state and the nation.

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PHOEBE'S PHOODS

special article for those special people vegetarians

if you are going to give up meat, it is best to do it gradually while learning how to prepare other basic foods. the reasons for this are: 1. you won't be forced to work with an unfamiliar subject. 2. there is always something to fall back on (meat) 3. you can take your time and learn the full importance and ramifications of your diet. 4. cooking takes time to learn and complementary proteins will be rather foreign.

a good protein source is important and easy to find if you know what you're looking for. an excellent guide and cookbook is Frances Moore Lappe's "Diet for a Small Planet". it is very important, and usually unknown that most of your body's oil is supplied by the fat in meat. so to ease digestion and to keep your skin young use lots of oil and butter.

roasted sunflower seeds

oven 275 degrees; 1 lb. sunflower seeds; ¼ cup olive oil; sea salt. put seeds in bowl, stir in oil (all seeds should shine), add salt, bake 10-20 min. 'til brown.

some great soup

1. saute lots (or any of) onions, celery, peppers and carrots in soup pan.

2. add water - when vegies are fried.

3. add any combination of the following: cabbage, tomatoes, tomatoe paste, potatoes, brown rice, dulce, sea salt, beans, etc. beans, etc.

4. cover and cook on a medium low flame.

sesame-rice fritter puffs

(from "Diet for a Small Planet")

two-thirds cup brown rice (cooked); 1 tsp. sea salt; ¼ cup sesames; ¼ cup milk; 2 separated eggs; 2 Tsbts. pepper; oil.

1. toast sesames 'til golden.

2. mix milk, yolks, flour in salt.

3. combine milk mixture, sesames 'n rice- mix well.

4. fold in stiffly beaten egg whites.

5. drop by tablespoonfuls on hot oiled pan- fry 'til brown. good with curry rice.

i have made something similar with separated eggs and rice- oh, so good.

enjoy what you eat - (ha!)

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