

Traffic Changes To Improve Farm Show, Ag Dept. Access

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HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Driving here this summer and fall to the state Farm Show Complex and the state Department of Agriculture building may pose some inconvenience because of scheduled road constructions.

The road work is to eventually improve traffic flow in the regularly heavily congested area that includes Cameron Street, Elmer-ton Avenue, Wildwood Park Drive, the access road to Harrisburg State Hospital, and HACC Drive.

The road work, which began last week, should continue through mid-August, according to Gregory Penny, spokesman for PennDOT District 8.

In a news release, it was announced that, "Motorists are advised that most of the work on Cameron Street will take place at night, between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m., and should not interfere with daily traffic patterns — especially the morning and evening rush hours.

"Construction work on Elmer-ton Avenue may involve restricting traffic lanes during the day. Motorists who use these roads should allow additional time in their travel plans to avoid any delays (sic)."

In a telephone interview, Penny also said that, immediately following the completion of work on those streets and intersections, other work is to begin on the Maclay Street railroad bridge, just east of the main office entrance of the Farm Show Complex.

The latter work should be in progress during the fall dairy and livestock shows. However, exhibitors and visitors who travel I81 to the Farm Show Complex should not experience any difficulty with access, and should be among the first to enjoy any traffic flow improvements from I81 onto Cameron, and to the Farm Show Complex.

The work planned by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) is unique in that it is being mutually financially supported by all major agencies or institutions that are to benefit from the new traffic flow patterns.

The summer projects are contracted with Adams County Asphalt Company, of Harrisburg, at a cost of \$1,693,567. Federal funds are to be used to pay for 75 percent of the project, while various state and local funds are committed to cover the remaining amount.

Those agencies and institutions also contributing to the cost of road renovations include the Harrisburg Area Community College (HACC), the state Department of Agriculture, the state Department of Public Welfare, the Governor's Office of Administration, and Susquehanna Township.

According to Penny, even though the different agencies of government all receive tax dollars to use, this roadworks project represents one of the most cooperative spending ventures for mutual benefit by state and local agencies. The project was started several years ago by a group of state agency people (including some who now work in other areas of government) who initiated efforts to seek a solution to the growing traffic problems in the vicinity.

Traffic flow in the area had been a concern for at least a decade.

A major problem has been the almost traditional long lines of traffic on Cameron Street, Maclay

Street, and on the off-ramp from I81 onto Cameron St., caused by the annual state Farm Show.

Traffic is also intermittently heavy year-round because of regularly scheduled professional soccer games, major auto shows, international livestock shows, national dairy shows, sportsman shows, building shows, horse shows, and other annual events.

The traffic situation is also aggravated by the fact that public entrances to the state Farm Show building and the state Department of Agriculture headquarters are on opposite sides of the same stretch of Cameron Street.

Furthermore, the entrance to the Harrisburg State Hospital is immediately adjacent to the agriculture building parking lot; the entrance to the Harrisburg Area Community College is adjacent to the state Farm Show Complex parking lot, along Wildwood Park Drive; and the state Game Commission and Pennsylvania State Police headquarters are located along Elmer-ton Avenue, which is really a sister road to Wildwood Park Drive.

Not only do the roadways in this area attract a lot of traffic because of the various agency headquarters, the college, hospital and the large public events complex, but other local traffic patterns add to

the problem.

Commuting Harrisburg city workers and others traveling through the capitol city use Cameron Street during the morning and evening rush hours as access to and from I81, Routes 322 and 11-15, and Front Street.

And, for the past several years, there has been an ongoing dispute between local municipal officials and the state over requests for traffic control during rush hour.

The heart of that controversy has been over which government should be responsible for paying for the police force necessary to control city traffic on state roads, etc.

For years, city police would direct traffic at the exit of the state agriculture building parking lot, so that workers could safely go home during the evening rush.

The need for regular local police to control traffic should be almost eliminated by the changes.

The plans include the creation of a new intersection with a traffic light and extra turning lanes between the agriculture building and the Farm Show building; the widening, addition of lanes, and upgrading of control lights at the Wildwood-Elmer-ton and Cameron Street intersection; and the widening and addition of lanes at

the Cameron Street and Maclay Street intersection.

As Cameron Street currently exists, it is a two-way, four-lane highway with no turning-only lane. Turning into the Farm Show parking lot from the northbound lane of Cameron Street currently requires tying up the left lane, which restricts through traffic to a single lane.

The intersection in front of the agriculture building is to be created by rerouting the Harrisburg State Hospital Road through the ag building's parking lot to a point opposite the main public entrance-exit for the Farm Show Complex. A limited amount of agriculture department parking space is to be lost.

At the proposed intersection, north-travelling traffic on Cameron Street will have one left-turn-only lane into the Farm Show parking area, and two other lanes for ongoing or right-turning traffic.

South-bound Cameron Street traffic will have a right lane yielding turn into the Farm Show parking lot, two through-traffic lanes, and one left-turn-only lane.

Also, the new traffic-light intersection is to have pedestrian crosswalks.

As it is now, pedestrian traffic across Cameron Street between the Farm Show and the ag building is

officially restricted to an underpass walkway, which is to remain.

At the north end of the Farm Show parking lot, the changes are to provide dual, left-turn lanes on southbound Cameron Street for access to eastbound Elmer-ton Avenue, and dual left-turning lanes on northbound Cameron for access to westbound Wildwood Park Drive.

Elmer-ton Avenue, along which are the Game Commission and State Police headquarters, is to be widened to provide three lanes the full distance from Cameron Street to Crooked Hill Road. The three lanes will consist of two eastbound and one westbound lane.

Westbound Wildwood Park Drive is to be widened to two right-turning lanes into HACC Drive.

Northbound HACC Drive is to be widened to two lanes for its length to the driveway entrance of the Pennsylvania State Employees Credit Union building.

The initial work begun last week was to widen Cameron Street and Elmer-ton Avenue.

Officials warn that Elmer-ton Avenue may be restricted to one lane during the day.

No daytime restrictions are anticipated for through-traffic on Cameron Street. After 6 p.m. and prior to 6 a.m., however, it may be restricted to one lane.

Phila Rep Wants More Benefits For Farmworkers

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tion, which would drastically change the scope of benefits afforded seasonal farm workers, irrespective of citizenship or legal residence.

Although the Pennsylvania mushroom industry, located heavily in southeastern Pennsylvania, was cited as being among the types of industries targeted by supporters, the implications of the total package are yet to be completely analyzed objectively.

In part, the package would eliminate distinctions between types of farm labor, with respect to longevity of employment; provide minimum wage protection, except for those living close to and working for small farms; extend child labor law protections to the children of farmworkers; allow farmworkers the right to organize and collectively bargain; and provide protections under the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act, which would stipulate certain living conditions at farm labor camps; charge the state Human Relations Commission with the duty to investi-

gate and rule on discrimination complaints by farmworkers; mandate that migrant farmworkers be guaranteed wages paid for three-quarters of the money they would have made, if they arrive at a farm and the expected crop can not be harvested; provide guaranteed wages if employment is terminated, unless fired for good cause (reasons must be written down and records kept for three years); mandate that farm owners would be responsible for paying all payroll taxes and deductions for migrant workers; pay overtime on the same basis as covered under the Minimum Wage Act; provide minimum wages; and keep and maintain a number of records on the workers for three years; and a number of other changes which make it the responsibility of the farm owner, and in some cases, the employer to make sure that benefits and records are kept on each worker; extend the scope and authority of the existing Farm Labor Committee; and mandate that data be collected on the injuries and illnesses of farmworkers living in farm labor

camps.

Cohen initially announced the package late last week during a press conference in the Main Capitol building rotunda, after newspaper deadline.

Though no farmworkers issued support for these changes to the law, there are several organizations which have expressed support for Cohen's proposal.

Those organizations include the Pennsylvania Council of Churches, Harrisburg, the Pennsylvania Catholic Council, the New Jersey-based Comite De Apoyo a los Trabajadores Agricolas/Farmworkers Support Committee, the Pennsylvania AFL-CIO, the Harrisburg Area NAACP, and the Association of Mexico.

The involvement of the church groups centers on their religious programs for migrant or seasonal farm workers, according to Cohen's assistant Cassidy.

According to Cassidy, Cohen has, in the past, been involved on committees that looked into labor issues, including some farmworkers. Cassidy said there are some day haulers who live within Cohen's 202nd District, though they have not formed any representative group on their own.

No farmworkers spoke on behalf of the proposed legislation.

To date, the main opposition has been the Pennsylvania Farmers' Association. According to PFA President Keith Eckel, Cohen's legislation is misdirected, dangerous for Pennsylvania agriculture, and redundant.

Although it would seem to have an effect, no one has yet addressed

the possible conflicts these changes may have with ongoing NAFTA negotiations. Creating higher standards for labor compensation could possibly create problems with ongoing side negotiations with Mexico over labor and environmental issues as they pertain to establishing a first-ever North American Free Trade Agreement.

Labor issues are being negotiated with NAFTA because of concerns that Mexico's low worker protection and wages would allow agricultural businesses to move there and compete unfairly with local farm labor jobs, and further destroy the existing state tax base, since overhead costs of production in Mexico would be substantially lower.

In his remarks, Cohen said of his proposal, "The basis for the amendments which I am proposing today, is to bring farm workers closer to first-class citizenship, enjoying the same protections of law as other citizens."

In his opposition, Eickel said, "Based on what Rep. Cohen said at his news conference, the three proposed bills demonstrated a lack of understanding of farming and the migrant labor situation in Pennsylvania. Ninety-nine percent of everything they asked for migrant workers is already covered by state or federal law.

"What they are really seeking is to cover all farm employees under the State Labor Relations Act and other laws designated to protect migrant labor. If successful, it could be a disaster for agriculture."

Snyder Establishes Award

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — J. Roy Snyder recently committed \$10,000 to benefit students in the College of Agricultural Sciences at Penn State.

Snyder, who received an asso-

ciate degree in agricultural business at Penn State in 1916, created this award in honor of his son, grandson, and granddaughter-in-law, all of whom graduated from Penn State.

Establishes Ag Scholarship

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — Henry F. Pierce, II, a 1943 Penn State graduate, has committed \$25,000 to Penn State to establish the Henry F. Pierce, II, Scholarship in Agricultural Sciences.

The scholarship will provide recognition and financial assistance to undergraduate students enrolled in the College of Agricultural Sciences who have shown marked academic improvement during their third or fourth semesters.

The college's scholarship committee, along with recommendations of academic advisers for the College of Agricultural Sciences, will select a number of recipients each year and determine the amount awarded to each. Students who remain eligible may receive the scholarship more than once.

Before his retirement, Pierce was the president of BFC Chemical Company in Wilmington, Del.

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