

Improvements to Route 309 may bring more truck traffic

By CHARLOT M. DENMON
Staff Writer

Ed Schechter has been interested in improving transportation in the Back Mountain for more than two decades. He says improvements on Route 309 are among the most significant changes made during the past 10 years.

"The highway lighting is improved and renovations and repairs during the years have helped reduce the number of major accidents. The reduced speed limit has probably been a factor as well," Schechter said.

"There has been an increase in traffic due to the growth in development in the Back Mountain and with the improvements to Route 309, there are more trucks preferring to travel this way. Route 309 today has only minor tie-ups

Increasing truck traffic is a big concern for the future

compared to those of five or 10 years ago. I believe that is due to the new construction done in the past two years.

"Local residents may consider the tie-ups inconvenient, but when you look at the state's perspective of three-quarters of an hour or more, local tie-ups are minor."

Schechter, who lives in Jackson Township, does foresee difficulty in the future, sometime in 1991, when the work going on to complete the Cross Valley is completed.

"Completion of the Cross Valley will give some relief to the Conyngham Avenue tie-ups we now

have but that same completion may well bring heavier traffic through the Back Mountain."

Schechter explained that more trucks will come down Route 309 to our area, through Dallas, Shavertown, and Trucksville. He said the truck traffic will be heavier and substantiated by more people.

"Even the above would not overcrowd our highways but for three factors," Schechter explained.

First, the Tunkhannock bypass that will go straight through will channel traffic across the bridge over the Susquehanna River and down Route 309.

Second, Route 309 would be the preferred route to Conyngham Avenue and from there to Route 81 and 80 and third, the Abingtons are fighting truck traffic and if they win the trucks will come our way.

"The Proctor and Gamble volume of trucks is staggering; from

"Route 309 today has only minor tie-ups compared to those of five to 10 years ago."

Ed Schechter

one plant alone there are 304 trucks," Schechter explained.

Schechter said that a request has been made through several groups that the State Department of Transportation do a study of the trucks traveling from the northern tier, but after the Cross Valley is completed the study may take a couple of years, perhaps even five or 10, and no matter what the study shows the local area faces a problem with trucks.

He is also concerned with the traffic problems around the center

END OF THE '80's REVIEW

of Dallas.

"There has been an increase in accidents and in the summer the flow of traffic will increase substantially. Commercial business is moving up Route 415 and as that continues to grow, traffic will increase toward Route 118. The access and exits through Dallas Borough will not get better," Schechter predicted.

As far as the other roads in the Back Mountain are concerned,

Schechter foresees they will have greater use but he believes the maintenance done by the municipalities will keep them in good shape with the exception of the five corners at the intersection near Huntsville Dam. As more students enroll at Penn State Lehman Campus, he believes there should be a light at the intersection.

He also feels that some of the curbsing are too tight along 309 and 415; that they really need a marginal road with one entrance and one exit.

"These roads are expensive and require the condemnation of a lot of properties and people are not willing to pay for it," Schechter explained.

But overall, the Back Mountain's highways are in much better condition than they were at the beginning of the decade, Schechter feels.

Pressure

(continued from page 1)

dents seem to be satisfied with the government. They said few residents come to the meetings unless they have a complaint which can usually be solved.

In Dallas Borough, Mayor Paul LaBar said traffic problems have increased due to growth in the Back Mountain and problems in government have become greater. "The borough is more difficult because there are more residents than previously," LaBar said. "It has become less personal and there are many new faces. We have a lot of newcomers who come and go. Some of them get on the board, make decisions, then move out and let the natives hanging. City people move into the area and expect the same services they had living out there."

Howard Grossman, executive director of the Economic Development Council of Northeastern Pennsylvania, said the biggest change in the last decade is the increase in population and inflated housing costs.

"Here as in other parts of Northeastern Pennsylvania, there is some concern about newcomers coming and taking control which is prevalent in areas of this region but sometimes that is good. New blood sometimes makes the biggest differences in planning for the future," Grossman stated.

He believes officials of Back Mountain communities should take some steps to create a council of governments. Grossman also believes that there were more efforts for better transportation in the early 1980's than now.

"There have been cutbacks in the Luzerne County Transporta-

END OF THE '80's REVIEW

tion Authority during the past decade and an extension of highway growth beyond Sweet Valley and a change in the types of services.

"We didn't have 911 in the 1980's, but the municipalities did initiate the advanced life support system which has been working well. I believe 911 will come."

"One negative factor is that instead of fewer water systems, which was a Back Mountain goal, today we have more which is not good," Grossman concluded.

Robert Brown, once mayor of Dallas and more recently borough manager, said he liked the area as it was in the old days, cool and calm but he realizes that can't be forever. In the 1960's he helped bring sewers to Dallas and in the 1950's he helped bring in industry.

"If we didn't have industry, I told them we had to have shopping centers and now we have both," Brown said. "School consolidation came about and it worked for the better and improved the educational curriculum."

What bothers Brown is that new people from other states came in and promoted good ideas but then

"There is a population change and a lot of the newcomers who know nothing about the area think they do and want to run it."

A Dallas Township official

they left and the natives were left hanging with high prices.

Brown also pushed for police consolidation and although the departments did not actually consolidate, they have moved to the point where they work with one another.

"In spite of development, Dallas Borough has not moved forward," Brown said. "We need a review of taxation, planning and zoning and we need reassessment and re-evaluation. We have unfair taxation in the Back Mountain. I believe we should have one large Back Mountain municipality to put our area in a status to get money from the state rather than having it all go to Pittsburgh and Philadelphia."

Brown said there has been tremendous growth in the area and traffic is too much for the highways. He also said that municipal officials have to grow with the development.

"The future for the Back Mountain is consolidation and the borough has not improved in the past 20 years. It has done nothing but the sewers and fixed a few streets

"New blood sometimes makes the biggest difference in planning for the future."

Howard Grossman
Executive Director, Economic Development Council of Northeastern Pennsylvania

but didn't use the excess funds they kept in the bank.

"When I was borough manager there were three roadmen, now there are two, there were four policemen instead of three. The residents need and want police protection and there is not enough road help. People know higher taxes are necessary," Brown concluded.

Alan Major, a member of Luzerne County Planning Commission who resides in Lehman Township, said the biggest change in Lehman Township in the past 10 years are the sewers and next the four or five developments.

"We had planning and zoning in the 1960's, but in the past 10 years we had the county come in and revised the ordinances and brought them up to date. If the purchasers of the water company decide to sell the land owned by the company, we may have more developers seeking to build. The only other major changes in Lehman Township is that we blacktopped some roads that were not blacktopped before," Major said.

END OF THE '80's REVIEW

The school population in the Dallas district has actually declined in recent years

teachers began team teaching and bringing innovative ideas into the classroom," she explained. "The senior high program is advancing and the Industrial Arts Program with the use of computers is teaching advanced drafting to prepare students for college. Industrial arts used to be considered shop, now taxpayers see it as things students can use."

Sichler said the same is true in the new computers for the writing center in the writing lab. She said without good communication skills, students can't make it in today's world.

"The district is fortunate that it has good teachers, interested and dedicated to helping the students. The principals have encouraged the teachers and many of the programs have come from department heads. The teachers have even come to the board with whole programs," Sichler concluded.

Lake-Lehman High School expansion, new facilities draw praise from teachers

By CHARLOT M. DENMON
Staff Writer

Teachers and administrators say the expanded and renovated Lake-Lehman High School will be well worth its cost.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Charles Borchetta explained that the building, which was built in 1962, is being used in a different manner than it was designed for 27 years ago.

"Outside pressures on school facilities have determined the need for different kinds of space for an extended period of time," he explained.

High School Principal Jay Zaleskas said the high school is in dire need of additional space.

"At the present there is no way to expand for new courses—we have no room. We have no conference rooms for the itinerant persons from the LIU and the proposed science labs will mean better and modern facilities for the students."

"Our phys ed program needs the added team rooms and our industrial arts program is getting into robotics, which should be housed separately," Zaleskas said.

The principal also explained that the newly renovated library will become a true media center including audio-visual equipment, computers and other updated

equipment. He also praised the proposed new guidance suite.

"That is very important," Zaleskas explained. "The present guidance offices are so small it is difficult for the counselors to work privately with the students. It will make a big difference."

Mrs. Lynne Lewis, head of the home economics department is elated about the proposed plans.

"If all goes as planned, the district will have ultra-modern facilities," Lewis said. "Lake-Lehman will have the premier home economics department in the state. Our facilities will be modernized, we will have more working space and our child development program will be enhanced. Our food lab will be better equipped and we will be able to offer more to the students. We will also have a teacher demonstration area and an auxiliary kitchen and a sewing lab," Lewis concluded.

Mrs. Christine Kopcho, head of the science department, said that presently the science department does not have enough room for the students.

"Under the proposed building project, we will have sufficient science rooms and enough science labs for the students. There will be

"Lake-Lehman will have the premier home economics department in the state."

Lynne Lewis
Home economics department head

no more 'hit or miss' classroom space.

"We will also have plenty of storage space and our labs will be new and modernized, fully equipped for the students to work. It will be wonderful," Kopcho said.

There is an air of excitement among both faculty and students at Lake-Lehman High School as they begin to realize the benefits that will come with the proposed building project.

A tax millage increase of seven mills over the next two years to help finance the \$3.7 million renovation project for the senior high school does not seem to be too much for most of the district's taxpayers.

A meeting held Wednesday, Dec.

20, to present an overall explanation of the project was attended by only a few taxpayers. The projected increases in millage will probably mean three mills the first year and four mills the second year. Those increases are to finance the high school project and do not include any millage that may be needed to cover operating expenses.

The project is scheduled to begin in the spring and the total cost includes furnishing, staffing, lighting, heating, insurance, bond fees, administrative expenses and other items associated with the renovations to the building.

Citizens'

(continued from page 1)

Lake; L.J. Law, Ross Township; Murray Miller, Jackson Township; James Ryan, Jackson Township; Anne Vernon, Kingston Township, two years term.

Nancy Eckert, Dallas; Will Conyngham, Lehman Township; Howard Grossman, Dallas Township; Ben Phillips, Dallas; Ed Schechter, Jackson Township; Deloris Slesiensky, Kingston Township and Jacqueline Williams, Dallas Township, three years term.

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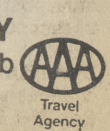
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