



**NEWS ITEM** - With only three months left until the opening of the Cross Valley Expressway, PennDOT has informed Back Mountain municipalities of the need for additional traffic signals-which the local towns must pay for.

**Fast Lane**

(continued from page 1)

Creek again in 1975 during Hurricane Heloise.

In 1989, someone drove through the chainlink fence the Taylors installed to protect their grandchildren when they visit. Nobody was home when the accident occurred.

"We have no children here now. It wouldn't be safe for them."

The house itself has always been missed by errant vehicles, but not other objects.

"You'd be surprised when I come out in the morning and pick up the beer bottles they throw from the highway," said Taylor, pointing at dents in his home's siding where the bottles hit.

"I don't even do anything with the house. I just left it go. It's really gone downhill," Taylor said with an air of resignation. "We put it up for sale twice. We had no bites and I never did it after that."

"I would move tomorrow if you would buy the place. I tried to get the state to take it when they rebuilt the highway. They said, 'We're not in the real estate business.'"

According to a Department of Transportation map, the state's right-of-way line extends through the front of Taylor's house.

"I've lost more than you can

believe, the money I put into this house I can never get it back."

**A dozen deaths outside**

More than money has been lost on the twisting stretch of 309 that cuts through the mountain between Luzerne and the Back Mountain.

"I've seen so many accidents. I can't even start to talk about them," said Taylor. "I've seen a dozen people die out on this highway."

Taylor doesn't think a slower speed limit would do much to prevent more accidents.

"People still go up and down here at 55," he said. The speed limit is presently 45 m.p.h. in front of his home.

"Of course the police are out here. They get 'em every day for speeding. One thing I will say, we do have a good police force. They handle the highway the best they can."

"I think a divider would be a good thing though. We haven't had many people killed down in Trucksville since they put it up." Eventually, Taylor expects that a divider will be installed in front of his home, like the one which begins several hundred yards south at the intersection of Hillside Road.

"It's not the best looking thing. I wouldn't be able to cross the highway. In a way it would

help, because every accident we have—nine out of ten—they're always coming the other way."

South of Taylor's home at Back Mountain Music, the divider is jokingly referred to as the "Great Wall of Trucksville."

Gary McCoog, the owner of the shop figures that the divider has saved lives though.

"It's been up for two years and usually there was a bad one every year."

There have been other improvements to the highway, according to Taylor. A lot of water used to run across Route 309. Higher curbs and storm drains have helped stop that.

"We had water coming through our driveway so it was like a creek until they put up the blacktop. And look at what I have," he said, pointing to the sharp curb which separates the highway from the driveway.

"I'm very disgusted with the curbing. You pretty much have to stop when you come off the road," said Taylor. "I wish they'd change it so you don't fly out of your seat getting out of here. Your head can hit the ceiling if you go too fast."

**Safety**

(continued from page 1)

Mountain.

"I live in Jackson Township," said Radomski. "I know the problems. I know there is only one road. There are presently about 25,000 vehicles daily on the Luzerne-Dallas Highway and approximately 1,500 of these are trucks."

"With the completion of the Cross Valley we don't know how great the increase in truck traffic will be but our guess is that the increase of vehicles daily could go to 45,000 daily."

The top four priorities explained by PennDOT officials were installing a barrier from Wasserott's to Harveys Lake; establishing a limited access vicinity; installing interchanges where needed (not always practical, they said); and determining what possible detours are available in the event of accidents.

"None of these would happen overnight," Mattei explained. "There is federal trust money available to help eliminate such problems as in the Back Mountain area. There is money available for such priorities as park and ride lots, incorporated police departments and high occupancy lanes."

A suggestion to install more traffic signals at the municipalities' expense drew an unfavorable reaction.

Dallas Borough councilman Don Cooper said he understood the town is responsible for a signal and that if they have a study done and the town does not have the light installed, and an accident occurs, the town is responsible.

"Is there any way to get money for these lights or to change the law of responsibility?" Cooper asked.

Dallas Township supervisor Frank Wagner said he thought PennDOT should pay for the Back Mountain traffic signals just as they did for those at the end of the Cross Valley where it intersects with Conyngham Avenue, Wilkes-Barre.

Mattei explained that would take a change of law which is a long and difficult process. He also said that it might be possible to get federal money for lights by working through a Traffic Management Association. He mentioned the intersection by Mark II as an example.

Citizens' Council member Ed Schechter stated that it might be best for PennDOT to assign one or two engineers to work with representatives of the group to chart alternatives for the highway, then the feed the proposed alternatives back to the entire group and in six months to a year come up with an

optimum plan.

Council President Nancy Eckert suggested formation of a group to study the ingress and egress from some of the side roads, which was favorably accepted by the members.

**Police chiefs glad to see some action**

Local police chiefs felt the meeting was a good start.

"It was productive," said Kingston Township Police Chief Paul Sabol. "I think the park and ride, staggering starting and quitting time of businesses lengthening the time of the green light on the highway at Carverton Road intersection and limited driveways, are good ideas. I don't approve of turning on red at Carverton Road is a good idea. That could be dangerous. It might be all right if there was a line to turn on red by passing Carverton Road."

"Trucks will be a problem and there's no doubt we will get a lot more of them using the highway when the Cross Valley opens. The biggest tie-up now is at Carverton Road and when we get more of those 40-foot trucks on the highway it's going to be worse. In the

winter if there is an accident with a truck on Route 309, it will back up traffic back to Luzerne," Sabol said.

Larksville Mountain and Dug Road could be alternate routes for the traffic. They might need some work on them but they would ease some of the traffic on the highway," Sabol said.

Dallas Borough Police Chief John Fowler was very impressed. The members were genuine with their concerns, he said.

"I was to only one meeting before last Wednesday and I was impressed with their help and guidance. The Transportation Management Association is a great idea. They were very receptive to ideas and we need their input. I believe the meeting was a good start."

Dallas Township Police Chief Carl Miers was unable to make the meeting but he discussed it later with supervisor Frank Wagner.

Miers said a lot of the truckers are now using Route 309 because it has only a few lights.

"I have no doubt that the traffic will increase when the Cross Valley is completed. The route will be shorter and less restricted. It will mean a lot more traffic control."

**Tunkhannock bypass could add to problems**

By CHARLOT M. DENMON Staff Writer

A plan to relieve congestion in Tunkhannock could add even more car and truck traffic to the Back Mountain's overworked highways.

The Tunkhannock bypass was given a boost last week when the State Transportation Commission approved \$1.376 million for engineering the project and more than \$31 million for right of way acquisition and construction according to Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) official Rolly Keisling.

"The engineering phase has been moved into the first four-year segment of the Commission's 12-year plan. The right of way is in the second tier of the program which is normal, but it could be at least two years away from construction," Keisling said. "The Commission updates the program every two years so the construction could be moved up according to how the engineering work progresses. The money is available right now," said Keisling. "Construction could begin as early as 1993."

Keisling said the advancement of the project is a good omen for the construction.

"Ceco is doing a study to determine where the bypass starts and stops. At this point I don't know where the bottlenecks will be once the construction project gets underway," Keisling explained.

The bypass, which will allow vehicles to travel without stops from Route 6 onto Route 29, is expected to add car and truck traffic in the Back Mountain area. Once completed, the bypass and North Cross Valley Expressway will offer an unhindered path from Tunkhannock to interstates 80 and 81.

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