

Central Susquehanna Valley Thruway

Moving Ahead?



central
Susquehanna
transportation



Valley
project

Spring
2007

Bottleneck

Safety hazard.

Major impediment to North-South travel through Central Pennsylvania. Call it what you will, the roadway network located at the heart of the Central Susquehanna Valley challenges thousands of drivers every day, both local residents and those who live elsewhere. The solution is the Central Susquehanna Valley Thruway.



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THE NEED

Watch for deer as you travel U.S. Route 15 from New York into Pennsylvania. Watch for forests — green in the summer; shades of orange in fall. And watch for the Susquehanna River, the natural landmark that defines our region.

South of Selinsgrove, the land opens up, displaying rolling countryside, farmland, and pastures. Wide skies embrace you as you cross into Maryland.

But before you get to Selinsgrove, in and around Shamokin Dam, just about where the Susquehanna's North and West branches join, slow down and be real careful. The congestion will force you to lower your speed, but watch for the cars ahead of you. Some will be turning, heading for home or the shopping center. Others will be changing lanes, trying to get around those tractor trailers whose numbers seem to increase daily.

Welcome to the Central Susquehanna Valley and a roadway network that can barely meet the region's current needs, and will never accommodate the growth that's to come. A Central Susquehanna Valley Thruway (CSVT) is critically needed. Approximately 12-miles long, it would address traffic concerns:

- Along Routes 11 & 15, between the Selinsgrove Bypass and Tedd's Landing restaurant in Shamokin Dam, where the two routes divide;
- Along Route 15, for approximately four miles north of the divide;
- In the Borough of Northumberland, particularly the intersection of Route 11 (Water Street) and PA Route 147 (Duke Street); and
- Along Route 147, extending approximately four miles beyond Northumberland.



Traffic from Route 11 and Route 15 comes together in Shamokin Dam.

THE GOLDEN STRIP

This 3.5-mile stretch of Routes 11 & 15 was originally a three-lane roadway when constructed in 1944. It was widened to four lanes in 1959, and reconfigured in 1982 when a fifth, “continuous left turn” lane was added.

Retailers and restaurants of every type line the highway today, mixed in with several houses. Concentrations of private homes are found to the east and west, just one or two blocks away. The Susquehanna Valley Mall opened along 11 & 15 in 1978, spurring additional development, then undergoing a major expansion in 1997.

There are over one hundred driveways directly accessing the strip. There are side roads — 24 of them intersect the highway between the Bypass and Tedd’s Landing.

Maintenance on the strip is almost continuous. The surface has been repaired, removed, replaced. Lanes have been widened, drainage improved, and underground utilities relocated. Where possible, curbs and shoulders have been added.

But all the repairs and modifications cannot disguise the fact that a 3.5-mile stretch of road, intended to serve the area’s housing and shopping needs, has become the major thoroughfare through the Central Susquehanna Valley. Local traffic, slowing, stopping, turning, competes with fast-moving through traffic — truckers, anxious to deliver their goods in New York; families on their way to see relatives in Maryland; long-distance commuters traveling to jobs in Harrisburg.



Cars and trucks jockey for position on Routes 11 & 15.

BOROUGH OF NORTHUMBERLAND

As they drive through Shamokin Dam, a substantial number of trucks proceed north on Route 11, across the Blue Hill Bridge and into Northumberland. Many are headed to the Milton Industrial Park just off PA Route 147. Others, bound for Interstate 80, do not want to challenge the curvature and elevation of Route 15, and prefer to access I-80 via Route 147.

In either case, Route 147 has essentially become part of the Route 15 corridor. PennDOT surveys found that twice as many trucks use Route 147 as use Route 15.

Accessing Route 147 in Northumberland necessitates a left turn from Water Street (Route 11) to Duke Street (Route 147). As one would expect to find in any small town, the intersection is surrounded with homes and local businesses. The streets aren't particularly wide, basically constructed only to meet the needs of the community.

Now, however, there are tractor-trailers, often more than one, waiting to make a left turn. Sometimes a car can squeeze by on the right. But when two or three trucks are in the intersection, the cars and other trucks line up behind them, stretching across the Blue Hill Bridge.

Southbound trucks entering Northumberland on Route 147 find the limited access two-lane highway has quickly become a local street of stores and homes with free access and residential traffic, slowing, stopping, and turning. As is the case with the Golden Strip, heavy truck traffic combined with local vehicles results in motorist confusion and potential safety hazards.



Trucks on the Blue Hill Bridge, waiting to enter Northumberland...



...where more traffic tie-ups await them.

TRAFFIC VOLUME

Traffic amounts vary, based on land use, time of day, and other factors. These figures for average daily traffic are presented in a range of low to high. They are drawn from the full Needs Study Area.

All Traffic Volume in the Central Susquehanna Valley			
	1996	2000 <i>(unless noted)</i>	2006 <i>(unless noted)</i>
U.S. Routes 11 & 15 The Golden Strip	29,750 - 42,100	34,000 - 38,073	38,836 - 48,000
U.S. Routes 15 From U.S. 11 to PA 45	15,950 - 18,000	18,198 - 23,539	18,340 - 35,575
U.S. Routes 11 Borough of Northumberland	13,100	16,234	15,540 (estimate)

Truck Traffic Volume in the Central Susquehanna Valley			
	1996	2000 <i>(unless noted)</i>	2006 <i>(unless noted)</i>
U.S. Routes 11 & 15 The Golden Strip	3,300 - 5,100	2,740 - 3,427	3,495 - 3,840
U.S. Routes 15 From U.S. 11 to PA 45	2,000 - 2,200	1,819 - 3,060	1,473 - 3,039
U.S. Routes 11 Borough of Northumberland	1,400	2,532	2,606 (estimate)

Traffic Volume Sources: CSVT Environmental Impact Statement and PennDOT Roadway Management System.



The proposed CSVT is the single largest economic development project in the history of the greater Susquehanna Valley. The Greater Susquehanna Valley Chamber of Commerce remains committed to securing the long term funding needed for the CSVT to become a reality.

— Jan Wilson,
Interim President/CEO
Greater Susquehanna Valley
Chamber of Commerce

WHERE IS THE TRAFFIC COMING FROM?

Just as no man can serve two masters, a quality roadway cannot adequately handle high volumes of two distinct types of traffic. But that's the task of the highway network now serving the Central Susquehanna Valley.

Over 50% of the cars and over 90% of the trucks traveling in the Valley do not have an origin or destination within the Valley. What's more, 71% of the traffic in Northumberland, in the vicinity of the Blue Hill Bridge, have no origin or destination within the Borough.

The conflict between through and local traffic is the greatest contributing factor to unsafe road conditions in the Central Susquehanna Valley. Local drivers want unrestricted access to stores, restaurants, and other services and facilities along our highways. Those driving through the Valley want to maintain a high speed, and not be interrupted by stop lights, cross traffic, or drivers slowing down to make a turn. Too often, the result is a rear end collision.

Look at a road map of Pennsylvania and it is easy to see how the Route 15 corridor fits into an integrated transportation scheme for people and goods entering and leaving Central Pennsylvania. Look at that map more closely, and it is easy to see how the Valley is the lone remaining bottleneck...

North and south of us, the corridor is marked by thick red lines denoting a modern, divided limited-access highway.....Then it becomes a little red trickle of a line between Selinsgrove and Shamokin Dam. That red trickle indicates a local road — a local road trying to handle interstate traffic...

Interstate traffic should travel on an interstate-style freeway. There are ambitious plans rendered on ink and paper. It is time to convert the ink into concrete...

*—The Daily Item, Sunbury
January 14, 2007*



At its projected total cost of \$312 million, the CSVT represents the single largest economic development undertaking in the history of the predominantly rural region between Williamsport and Harrisburg. This project will not only solve a serious and growing transportation problem, but will serve as a catalyst for economic development throughout the Central Susquehanna Valley and beyond.

***—Joe McGranaghan, President
Sunbury Media Services***

GROWTH... AND MORE TRAFFIC

The past 20 years have seen significant growth in the Central Susquehanna Valley. And all indications are that this pattern will continue:

- 1,500 new housing units are in the approval process or under construction;
- 290 more motel/hotel rooms are anticipated;
- 1.3 million square feet of commercial/office/industrial development space are planned;
- Jobs will be provided for over 3,000 people.

Based on PennDOT estimates, by the year 2020 almost 5,700 housing units will be built and 9,300 new jobs will be generated in the Valley. As for daily traffic in 2020, that will increase also:

- Routes 11 & 15 in Shamokin Dam, from 36,900 to 79,000 — 114%;
- Route 147, from 13,550 to 29,500 — 117%;
- Route 11, from 13,275 to 26,550 — 100%; and
- Route 15, from 15,950 to 44,500 — 178%.

In short, nearly all the primary traffic routes in the Central Susquehanna Valley will be congested by the year 2020. Major portions of the Valley's roadway network already exceed the statewide average crash rate, for both fatal and non-fatal crashes. This situation can only be expected to worsen.



THE PROPOSAL AND PROJECT UPDATE

As proposed, the Central Susquehanna Valley Thruway (CSVT) will be a 12-mile, four-lane highway extending from the existing Selinsgrove Bypass (just north of the Borough of Selinsgrove) to PA Route 147 in Northumberland, just south of Route 147's interchange with PA Route 45. Montandon is to the north. Lewisburg is about two miles west, across the river.

The project will also include a bridge across the Susquehanna River, south of Winfield; and the Route 61 Connector between the CSVT's Shamokin Dam Interchange and Veterans Memorial Bridge, which links Sunbury and Shamokin Dam.

The project's primary objective is to separate local traffic from through traffic. In so doing, it will:

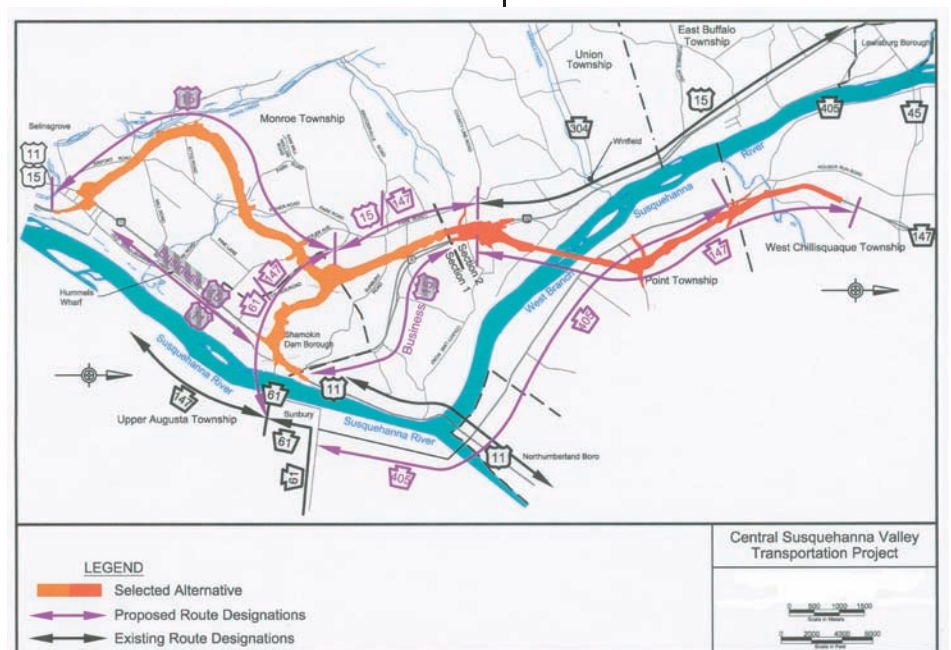
- Reduce congestion,
- Provide for future growth, and
- Improve safety for users of the area's Routes 11 & 15 and Route 147 transportation network.

The estimated project cost is \$312 million. In today's dollars, the estimated cost is somewhat less. However, anticipated inflation rates of 3% per year will raise the cost. In any case, as of February 2007, virtually no funding has been allocated for construction. The needed funds have yet to be identified.

“

“...it will stand for generations as a work reflective of today's aspirations for the future — a structure that further defines the Central Susquehanna Valley as a place and a community of distinction.”

*— CSVT Gateway Task Force
March 16, 2006*



The CSVT is indicated in orange.

THE NORTH SECTION AND NEW BRIDGE

For purposes of manageability, the CSVT project has been divided into two sections — North and South. The North section, which PennDOT plans to do first, extends from County Line Road, just below the Winfield interchange, to the project's northern terminus near Montandon. It includes the bridge, which will be 140-feet high and 4,00-feet long.

Final design work for the North section, including design of the Susquehanna River bridge, is expected to be complete by early 2008. STV Group, Inc. of Douglasville, PA is the consulting engineer.

If funds are available — \$109 million — PennDOT can proceed with earthwork, paving, and construction of the bridge. Completion of the North section will require approximately \$58 million in additional funds.

The CSVT bridge will be a major new landmark in Central Pennsylvania, based on sheer size alone. It has the potential to serve as a gateway to the Central Susquehanna Valley for motorists who will travel the new Thruway.



Distinctive bridges add character and identity to a region.

THE ROUTE 61 CONNECTOR AND SOUTH SECTION

The Route 61 Connector is a vital element of the CSVT project, critically needed to remove as much traffic as possible from Routes 11 & 15. It will primarily serve through-traffic to and from the Sunbury area and points east. Without it, such traffic is likely to continue using the Old Trail in Hummels Wharf/Shamokin Dam, the Golden Strip, and the four-mile stretch of Route 15, north of the Routes 11 & 15 divide.

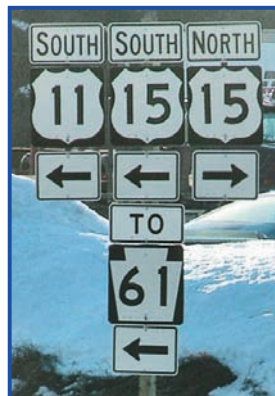
This summer, consulting engineers will be chosen to prepare final designs for the project's South section, including the Route 61 Connector. As of now, the construction schedule for the South section is as follows:

Earthwork	2010-2012
Structural work	2011-2013
Paving	2012-2014
Route 61 Connector	2012-2014

Like the CSVT project's North section, funds for the South section have yet to be identified. Approximately \$124 million will be needed to complete the South section.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED?

Significant work has been completed as part of the Central Susquehanna Valley Thruway project. Electric transmission lines have been relocated. Several individual properties have been purchased. Design work, testing, and drilling have been completed. To date Pennsylvania has invested approximately \$33 million in this project, and another \$35 million will be spent in pre-construction activities, wetlands planning, and environmental mitigation plans.





We consider the completion of CSVT to be the number one transportation priority in Pennsylvania to ensure economic development and to improve the quality of life for the people living in the Appalachian region of our state. Without Appalachian Development Highway funding of CSVT, this transportation project may be delayed indefinitely, negatively affecting the people in the Appalachian area of Pennsylvania for generations to come.

***— Route 15 Coalition
Appalachian Thruway
Association***

FUNDING THE CSVT PROJECT

According to a recent newspaper article, if someone were to give PennDOT a dime toward the cost of the CSVT project, the Department would then have ten-cents to begin construction. As of now, no funds are in place nor have they been identified.

As of early 2008, design work, preliminary engineering, and other preconstruction activities will be complete. If it has the money, Penn DOT will be ready to build.

ADDING CSVT TO THE APPALACHIAN DEVELOPMENT HIGHWAY SYSTEM

One funding proposal that has drawn considerable interest is inclusion of the CSVT in the Appalachian Development Highway System (ADHS), which is funded through the Appalachian Regional Commission. ADHS encompasses over 2,600 miles through the 13 Appalachian states. Approximately 500 miles of ADHS have yet to be completed. In Pennsylvania, ADHS encompasses 275 miles; leaving 178 to be completed.

An already intense competition for project funds would obviously be exacerbated through the addition of 12 miles, i.e., the CSVT. However, there is precedent for adding miles to ADHS. Through legislation proposed by former Senator Richard Shelby, 65 miles were added for a beltway around Birmingham, Alabama.

Adding miles to ADHS requires Congressional legislation. Senator Specter's staff has indicated the 2007-08 Appropriations Bill may be the appropriate vehicle, but the Senator's staff also stated it may have to wait until the 2010 Highway Bill.

Even after the CSVT is authorized as a part of ADHS, it must be deemed a priority project by PennDOT to receive funding. The entire Appalachian region only receives \$470 million annually for ADHS, meaning that it is not the entire solution, but could provide a portion of the federal funds needed for CSVT.

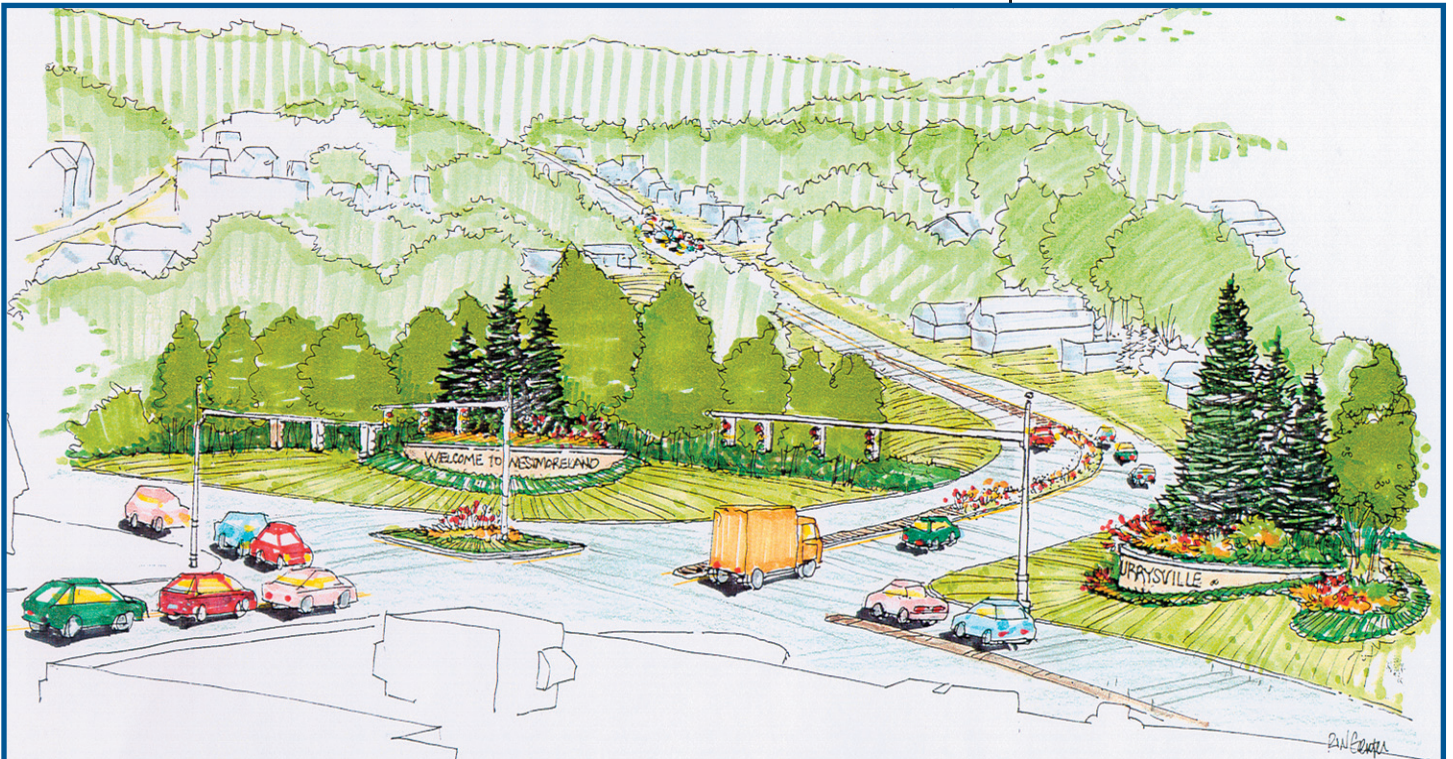
MOMENTUM TO PROCEED

A piece written about the proposed Thruway bridge states “...it will stand for generations as a work reflective of today’s aspirations for the future — a structure that further defines the Central Susquehanna Valley as a place and a community of distinction.” The same can be said for the CSVT project as a whole.

The Central Susquehanna Valley is ready for this project. Support is widespread among chambers of commerce, the media, local officials, and the general public. Through their letters, participation on task forces, and attendance at meetings and workshops, residents of the Valley have clearly expressed the necessity for the CSVT.

Significant public funds have been invested in such preconstruction activities as engineering, design, and property acquisition. There is a great sense of momentum to proceed with this project.

Before that can occur, we have a job to do.



The CSVT offers the potential for new, appropriate development in the Central Susquehanna Valley.

