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SUMMER 2026



School Transportation Receives More Than $1.1 Million in Grants

Pennsylvania
Department of Transportation

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This newsletter highlights our latest efforts to improve mobility and quality of life in Pennsylvania. As always, feel free to send story ideas or requests for information you want to see. If you're involved in an interesting or innovative project or initiative, have ever wondered about other parts of PennDOT's operations or have other suggestions, email the Communications Office at DOTcomm@pa.gov.

We hope you enjoy this latest issue!

School Transportation Receives More Than $1.1 Million in Grants to Train New School Bus Drivers



PennDOT announced an investment of more than $1.1 million in grant funding to help 26 schools and transportation providers across 19 Pennsylvania counties cover the costs to train more than 430 new school bus drivers, including commercial driver's license (CDL) training, trainee wages, and testing and permit fees. This investment is funded through PennDOT's School Bus Safety Grant Program to increase school bus safety for Pennsylvania's students and communities.

“With his latest budget, Governor Shapiro continues to make historic investments in education and our children's future. Making sure we have enough qualified drivers to get students to and from school safely and reliably advances that investment," said PennDOT Secretary Mike Carroll. “This funding gives schools and communities the support they need to ensure students can focus on learning and achieve success."

Pennsylvania law allows school districts to install and operate automated camera systems to enforce Pennsylvania's School Bus Stopping Law and keep children safe when they ride the school bus. Of the $300 fine assessed for these automated violations, the law requires $25 be paid to PennDOT for the School Bus Safety Grant Program.

Grants from the program can be used to pay for education, training, and other costs related to an individual earning their commercial learner's permit, commercial driver's license, or school bus endorsement for the purpose of driving a school bus in Pennsylvania. They can also promote and increase school bus safety, education, and training.

For a list of grant awards Scan:

Shapiro Administration Invests $38 Million in Municipal Traffic Signal Upgrades to Enhance Safety and Improve Traffic Flow



PennDOT announced that 86 municipalities across the Commonwealth will receive $38 million through the Green Light-Go Program to improve traffic safety and mobility by reducing congestion and improving traffic flow. Since Governor Shapiro took office, $134 million has been distributed to municipalities through the program, and over 1,700 traffic signals have been upgraded.

“Under Governor Shapiro's leadership, we're working to serve the people of our Commonwealth by improving the services that make a real difference in their lives," said PennDOT Secretary Mike Carroll. “The safety improvements supported by the Green Light-Go program will help municipalities keep Pennsylvanians moving safely and efficiently. I'm proud that PennDOT continues to partner with communities to deliver real results."

The list of awarded projects by county can be found on PennDOT’s website. Green Light-Go grants are provided as reimbursements to municipalities for projects that improve the efficiency and operation of existing traffic signals. These projects are funded through the FY 2026–27 budget. Eligible improvements include, but are not limited to, installation of light-emitting diode (LED) technology, traffic signal retiming, special-event traffic planning, traffic signal monitoring, and upgrades to modern signal technologies. For more information and a complete list of awarded projects, scan QR Code below.

Operation Yellow Jacket Rolls Out to Protect Workers and Drivers in Armstrong and Jefferson Counties



To enhance the safety on Armstrong and Jefferson County roads for construction workers, drivers and passengers, the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) teamed up for the 2026 construction season to deploy “Operation Yellow Jacket" in highway work zones.

The goal of Operation Yellow Jacket is not to issue citations but to encourage safer driving behavior both in work zones and on all roadways. Distracted or aggressive driving puts everyone at risk, including highway workers, motorists, and passengers.

“We're grateful to PSP for partnering with us on the Yellow Jacket Operations in Armstrong County," said PennDOT Armstrong County Maintenance Manager Aaron Raible. “When you encounter work zones, please drive the posted work zone speed limit, pay attention to signs and flaggers, and be patient for your safety and the safety of highway workers."

New Access Ramp at Baxter Bridge Supports Local Fire Response

As part of the Baxter Bridge Replacement Project, the project team partnered with the Summerville Volunteer Firemen's Association to incorporate a new access ramp leading to the edge of Redbank Creek. This improvement provides the fire association with easier, more reliable access to creek water when needed for emergency response.

“We're pleased to be able to accommodate the Summerville Volunteer Firemen's Association," said Paul Koza, Assistant District Executive for Construction. “Adding benefits for the community, when possible, makes a good project even better."

This $4.8 million project consisted of a full bridge replacement and other miscellaneous construction.



The Summerville Volunteer Firemen’s Association tests the new ramp to access water at the Baxter Bridge.

Ribbon Cutting Celebrates Safer Trail Crossing Over Route 22 in Indiana County



A ribbon cutting ceremony was held to officially open the new pedestrian bike bridge over Route 22 in Indiana County. The multipurpose bridge extends both the Hoodlebug and Ghost Town Trails, giving trail users a safe, elevated crossing over Route 22.

The $4.7 million multiuse bridge project was completed through a partnership with SPC and local entities. The ribbon cutting ceremony celebrated this major addition to the local trail network and drew a broad group of attendees, including local legislators, county commissioners, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn, and PennDOT representatives Larry Shifflet, executive deputy secretary, and District 10 District Executive Brian Allen.



Larry Shifflet, PennDOT Executive Deputy Secretary for Planning and Representative Jim Struzzi.

Quality Assurance Officers Receive Training



PennDOT's Driver and Vehicle Services (DVS) Vehicle Inspection Division recently hosted the third annual Quality Assurance Officer (QAO) training for over 75 QAOs and management staff from across the Commonwealth. With the safety of all drivers a focal point, this year's training session provided an opportunity to share valuable information and best practices regarding Pennsylvania's safety inspection program as well as recognize the great work this team engages in every day.

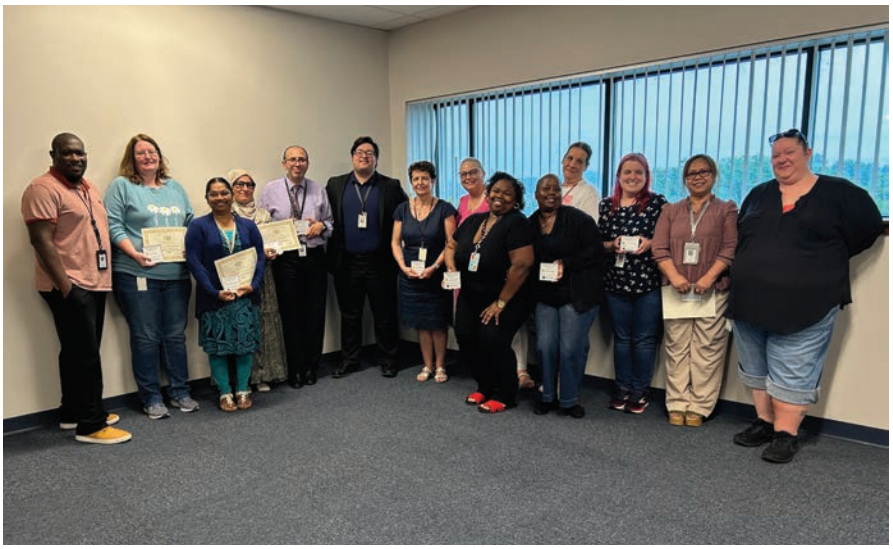
“As experts in your field, you balance your duty to hold inspections stations accountable with the need to educate and guide them through process improvements to ensure safety standards are consistently met and uniformly applied," said Kara Templeton, DVS Deputy Secretary. “The relationships you build and the guidance you provide strengthen not only individual stations, but the entire program."

With over 11.9 million registered vehicles in Pennsylvania, approximately 55 QAOs face the task of auditing, advising, and regulating the actions of approximately 15,000 safety inspection stations, 300 enhanced safety inspection stations, and 8,000 emission inspection stations across the Commonwealth. Their guidance and knowledge help provide consistency and proper inspection procedures for every vehicle inspected in the Commonwealth, assuring that each inspection station is conducting business to the highest, safest standards.

The annual training program gives the QAOs an opportunity to keep their knowledge of inspection station policies and procedures up to date. It also provides a way to learn from one another and strengthen professional relationships through making in-person contact.

Our mission is to ensure that “Pennsylvanians can have faith when leaving an inspection station that their vehicles are ready to safely head out on the road," said Templeton.

License Control Division Celebrates Its Experts with Appreciation Ceremony



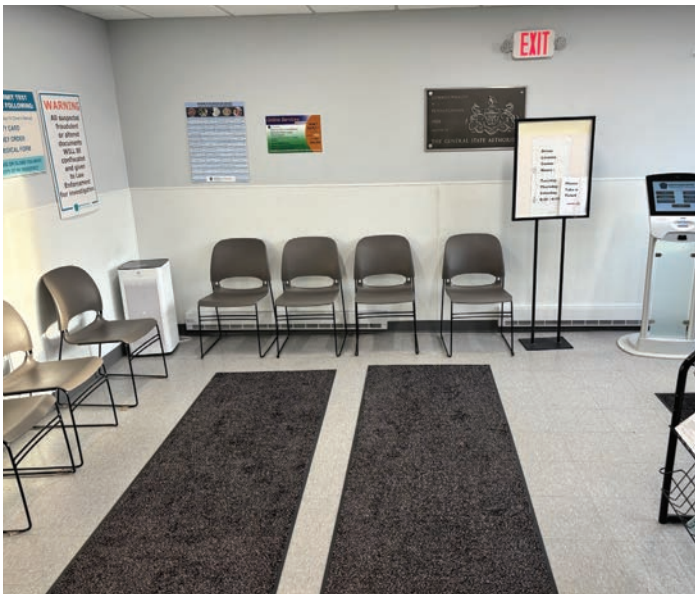
PennDOT Driver and Vehicle Services' License Control Division recently held an appreciation ceremony to recognize team members whose expertise and knowledge of their unit's operations have contributed significantly to the division's success.

Thirty-seven managers, supervisors, and clerical team members were awarded a Subject Matter Expert award this summer in recognition for their contributions to the division and PennDOT's mission of road safety.

“The expertise and the knowledge in our division is worth celebrating," said License

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DVS Improves Facilities to Enhance Customer Experience



Somerset Lobby - Before Renovations



Somerset Lobby - After Renovations

PennDOT's Driver and Vehicle Services continue to strive for better access and improved services for its customers by upgrading driver's license centers across the states through small and major renovation projects.

Most recently, the Somerset Driver's License Center at 5593 Glades Pike, Somerset, reopened after a three-month closure for major renovations, making it the 24th driver's license center to be upgraded since Governor Shapiro took office.

Improvements to the Somerset Driver's License Center include the addition of a new driver's license service counter and expanded photo service counters, as well as new furniture, LED lighting, flooring, insulation, and ceilings, and electrical and security camera upgrades. These improvements will allow for more efficient service and lower customer wait times.

Keeping with the Shapiro Administration's continued commitment to modernizing facilities and improve customer service, PennDOT has upgraded 24 of its driver license centers across Pennsylvania. Additionally, PennDOT frequently improves its facilities with lighting upgrades, restroom repairs and parking lot improvements, among other needed projects. The intended outcome of these repairs makes a visit to the driver's license center a more welcome occasion for Pennsylvania residents.

In addition to physical renovations improving customers' experience, all 76 driver's license centers in Pennsylvania are equipped with the Motor Vehicle Network, which displays relevant information to customers on flat-screen TVs while they wait.

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Control Division Chief Robert Dowling. “I want our team to feel like they have a home in this division. That starts with making [the team] feel seen, heard, and valued."

Comprising nearly 130 positions, the License Control Division covers many important functions under the Bureau of Driver Licensing within DVS. They are responsible for the sanctioning and restoration of drivers, driver and vehicle information sales, legislative affairs functions, ensuring legal presence of drivers, general processing operations, among many other vital tasks.

The appreciation ceremony allowed Dowling and the management team the opportunity to express their gratitude to those team members who continue to play a key role in keeping the division strong.

“It's important we work to promote a culture of servant leadership," said Dowling. “Recognizing and empowering our teams, as we did here, is how we make that happen."

Bridge Renamed in Memory of Late PennDOT Employee

By Jill Harry, Community Relations Coordinator, District 1

PennDOT District 1 employees and retirees joined family, community members, and state leaders to remember late colleague Earle Chandler on the eve of the 20th anniversary of his passing in a work zone crash.



Central of the ceremony was the designation of a bridge on Route 322 in Sugarcreek Borough, Venango County as the Earle Chandler Memorial Bridge.

Earle was a dedicated 20-year PennDOT District 1 employee. At the time of his passing, he was working as a Transportation Construction Inspector – Supervisor (TCIS) on Route 8 in Erie County. He was struck by a construction vehicle in the work zone on August 1, 2006.

On July 31, 2026, nearly 200 people, including dozens of Earle's family members, attended the initial ceremony at the Utica Volunteer Fire Department before a smaller group traveled to the Earle Chandler Memorial Bridge to unveil one of the signs on location.



Earle's daughter Emily Hagy and District 1 Construction Assistant District Executive Dax Nulph were among those who offered formal remarks and remembrance of him. Emily spoke about Earle's commitment to family and service to his community. Dax shared a story of Earle's comradery in the workplace and how he continues to impact the District through the Earle Chandler Safety Award effort.

“Earle was known to have a larger-than-life personality that made an impression on all those who had the pleasure of working with him. In the same way, his passing continues to impact our employees as we continue to cultivate an environment of safety," said Brian McNulty, District 1 Executive. “As we marked the 20th anniversary of his passing, it was a fitting time to officially rename this bridge in his memory, a bridge that he often traveled across during his commute from his home to the District 1 office."

Governor Josh Shapiro signed Act 17, which is the legislation designating the bridge on Route 322 over Sugar Creek near the village of Wyattville in Chandler's honor, on June 30, 2025. Pennsylvania State Representative R. Lee James included the bridge in the bill.

He was born in Butler County, graduated from Redbank High School and Penn State Behrend, and resided in Meadville with his wife Elizabeth and their three daughters, Emily, Erin, and Erica.

In connection with the event, PennDOT had the Traveling Workers Memorial on display at the Crawford County facility in Vernon Township.

District 8 Launches Young Engineers Club

By Dave Thompson, Community Relations Coordinator District 8, Retired



The pandemic and the introduction of teleworking have vastly changed office culture at District 8. With that in mind, District Executive Kevin Keefe recently launched an organization geared towards ensuring new engineers are supported with access to mentors and peers.

Kevin thought it would be a good idea to create a Young Engineers Club to provide new engineers who came on board during or after the pandemic with an opportunity to build working relationships while becoming part of a community of up-and-coming engineers.

The club would be a safe space where young engineers could bounce ideas off each other, share their experiences, and engage in educational and teambuilding activities such as field trips and off-hours social activities.

“The Young Engineers Club is for anyone with five or less years of engineering experience," said Ilary Harfy, a civil engineer in the district Bridge Unit who co-leads the club with Senior Civil Engineer Supervisor Kelsey Pianka. “We keep track of new hires, and we include them in our outings or anything that we do within the club. This helps new engineers get acclimated to the working environment and allows them to create connections."



The group started this past January and already has around 25 members and counting.

“It has been great to see how our group has grown and continues to grow," said Kelsey. “Ilary and I have found a good middle ground between fun and professional activities. This has allowed for good group bonding and mentorship among members"

She added, “I have recently had more CETs and new CEs approach me for advice on work, life, and their careers than ever before."

“I agree, I don't think I've ever had these many CETs and CEs come up and ask me questions, whether it's about life or work," Ilary said.

In addition to non-work-related social activities, members have taken field trips to Central Office and viewed processes at construction projects. The ultimate goal is to build relationships and develop bonds that promote teamwork and career growth.

“That is exactly what I envisioned with this organization -- building relationships with one another," Kevin said.

District 8 Employees Receive District Executive Awards

By Dave Thompson, Community Relations Coordinator District 8, Retired

Nine PennDOT District 8 employees were honored this year by District Executive Kevin Keefe for their dedication to the department and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. This round of District Executive Awards was announced recently after the recognition program was launched in 2024.

Nominees, who are selected from district office and county maintenance organizations, are recognized for consistent high-quality work and for embracing the department's mission of providing the best customer service for those who live and work in southcentral Pennsylvania.

“District 8 is blessed with a wealth of outstanding employees," Kevin said. “They consistently rise up to meet the challenges facing our complex transportation network."

Framed portraits of the award recipients are displayed on a district Wall of Fame at the entrance to the district office.



Top l-r: Manda Parr, Brock Berwager, Dave Thompson, Ed Walker, James Domen, Jason Sweigard, John Bachman, Jonathan Brennan, Kelsey Pianka

The nine DE Award recipients include:

- Dave Thompson, Community Relations Coordinator
- John Bachman, Senior Project Manager, Design
- Edwin Walker, SEMP Program Manager
- James Domen, Transportation Construction Inspector Supervisor
- Kelsey Pianka, Senior Civil Engineer Supervisor
- Jason Sweigard, Maintenance Repairman 2
- Manda Parr, Roadway Programs Coordinator, Adams County
- Jonathan Brennan, Deisel and Construction Equipment Mechanic, Perry County
- Brock Berwager, County Maintenance Manager, York County

“The recipients of the District Executive Awards work at a high level every day," Kevin said. “They ask for no praise, so it's satisfying to be able to honor them for their dedication."

The district's Star of Excellence nominees are chosen from the pool of DE Award winners.

District 8's Mark Malhenzie's Mural Concept Comes to Life





Mark Malhenzie's vision to create a mural at the PennDOT District 8 district office has finally come to life.

His mural design, which he developed several years ago in the form of a district map in the style of a tourism map, was recently painted to a large retaining wall along the visitor's entrance to the district office by Harrisburg area artist Katie Trainer. The map depicts the south-central District 8 region – Adams, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Lancaster, Lebanon, Perry, and York counties – and denotes key cultural, historical and transportation-related features.

Mark, a senior project manager in the district Design Unit, has overseen many complex highway and bridge projects during his nearly 35-year career with the department. To design the mural, he called upon his skills as a designer, artist and writer to create a map that celebrates the history and points of interest that make south central Pennsylvania so unique.

Mark's vision was to create a mural that would be seen by many people. The employee/visitor entrance seems ideal due to the presence of a large retaining wall, that in Mark's eyes, was a blank canvas in a perfect location.

Components of the piece include the three logos representing the Department of Highways/Department of Transportation history, significant highways, cultural and historical features, and transportation-related features that depict PennDOT's mission.

Mark said he wanted the map to include readily identifiable features such as major rail lines, notable bodies of water, and representations of the district's Construction, Design and Maintenance units.

He included multi-modal components, such as public transit, rail, trucking and air, historic features such as the Rockville railroad bridge near Harrisburg, the Gettysburg National Military Park, and the Columbia-Wrightsville Bridge connecting Lancaster and York counties.

Cultural representations included an Amish horse and buggy and covered bridge in Lancaster County, a chocolate bar in Hershey, hunting and fishing in Perry County, the state capital building in Harrisburg and the Appalachian Trail as it runs through multiple counties.

A memorial to fallen PennDOT workers was also incorporated into the piece. For this, Mark called upon his literary skills by crafting a poem that is depicted on a drawn scroll next to the map. His poem, titled "Our PennDOT Fallen," reads thus:

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Calendar Features Pedestrian Safety Messages Illustrated by Kids

By Saxon Daugherty, Community Relations Coordinator, District 1



District 1 and the Highway Safety Network collaborated with Erie Public School and Harding Elementary School to publish a calendar highlighting student art and pedestrian safety.

The program was part of District 1's Walk Safe, Drive Safe campaign, a yearlong effort to share pedestrian tips and guidelines through a variety of methods.

In September 2025, PennDOT and Highway Safety Network representatives spoke about pedestrian safety to 120 second- and third-grade students at Harding.

Following the presentation and demonstration the students were asked to draw a picture that depicted at least one of the tips they had learned.

The drawings were collected, and the best combination of illustrations were published alongside safety tips in the calendar. Calendars were distributed to 225 students, teachers and administrators at the school, providing them a way to share the information with others.

A printable version of the calendar was also posted on the District 1 webpage – www.pa.gov/DOTdistrict1.

The pictures included in the calendar were also turned into a monthly social media feature on PennDOT's northwestern region Facebook group and X account. Four of the top five performing pedestrian-safety related posts on PennDOT's northwestern region Facebook page were about the calendar program, generating nearly 6,500 impressions from just one of the posts, more than 19,000 impressions towards the overall communication plan's goal of 35,000 impressions in the regional group.

Due to its effectiveness, the calendar project will be repeated in the fall with the goal of collaborating with a Crawford County school district.

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For those who have served

And fallen in our midst

We honor your dedication, loyalty and sacrifice

You are remembered for your spirit, wisdom, and strength

Forever part of our family tree, its roots and branches

The roads we shall travel and bridges we shall cross

Will be gentle reminders of you for our future generations

To take up your path of selfless acts

Embrace our common bonds of serving the greater good

While standing together as one in your memory

Under the leadership of current DE Kevin Keefe, the district began a search for local artists who could make Mark's vision come to life. That's where professional artist Katie Trainer came into the picture. Katie, who was recommended by a colleague with the PA Turnpike, completed the mural this summer. Mark is delighted with the results.

“The final mural product recreated by the artist is now completed and she did a great job in my view," Mark said. “I am very humbled that Kevin and others who supported the endeavor went the extra step to having the drawing completed as was originally envisioned as a painted wall mural."

He added, “Considering I am now nearing my own 35 years of service, my sentimental hope is that the mural will serve as an interesting and fun focal point for employees and visitors to enjoy as they enter our building for years to come, that it may provide an appreciation towards our transportation industry in general, and most importantly for those that view the more serious part of the mural which pays tribute to our fallen PennDOT employees, they get to understand and respect the greatest sacrifice sometimes being made."

District 1 Wraps Up Successful Pedestrian Safety Outreach Campaign



PennDOT's District 1 Press Office recently completed a year-long communications plan aimed at improving pedestrian safety in the northwestern region.

The campaign, titled Walk Safe, Drive Safe, was in response to a series of high-profile pedestrian crashes in the area and extended from April 2025 through May 2026.

The plan established three specific goals – garner at least 35,000 total impressions on the department's northwest regional Facebook and X accounts, reach at least 2,500 people at traditional in-person community outreach efforts, and complete at minimum of 15 media interviews on pedestrian safety. All three goals were hit with nearly 50,000 impressions, 5,300 in-person contacts, and 22 media interviews.

The plan was developed based on an analysis of data in the region over a five-year span (2020-2024) and identified crash clusters and trends in pedestrian-involved crashes. The results put a spotlight on the City of Erie, followed by other urban areas including the City of Hermitage in Mercer County, the City of Meadville in Crawford County, and the City of Franklin in Venango County.

The campaign took a broad approach to reach people of all ages since everyone has the potential to be a pedestrian as well as offering outreach in all six counties. Three common unsafe behaviors – walking on the wrong side of the road, wearing dark-colored clothing, and being distracted by phones/earbuds – were used to craft the messaging of the campaign.

To meet the goals of the plan, 25 graphics were created or updated to target the unsafe pedestrian or driver behaviors and provide seasonal advice during winter, Halloween, and back-to-school. Many of these graphics were shared on PennDOT's statewide Facebook, Instagram, and X accounts. Facebook posts generated an additional 208,000 impressions and 550 shares, while X posts accounted for nearly 20,000 impressions and Instagram had more than 42,000.

To optimize the effort, an accompanying toolkit was created to provide materials to safety partners, police departments, media outlets, and the public through PennDOT's online media resources webpage. The toolkit includes a sampling of the graphics paired with suggested text with a link to PennDOT's pedestrian safety webpage. The toolkit also has a sample newsletter article focusing on how drivers and pedestrians should act when encountering each other at crosswalks or signalized intersections.

For in-person outreach, many of these efforts took the form of presentations at schools, senior centers, and community events. At least one outreach initiative was conducted in each of District 1's six counties and covered both rural and urban settings.

The most noteworthy programming was PennDOT's partnership with Harding Elementary School and the Highway Safety Network to create a pedestrian safety calendar featuring student made artwork. Other efforts included distributing LED lights and reflective keychains to promote visibility when walking and partnering with Oil City High School students to create a pedestrian-safety social media video.

Traditional news media including local television stations in the City of Erie and Youngstown, Ohio, weekly and daily newspapers, and radio stations also played an important role in spotlighting the pedestrian safety messaging. The press office hosted regular press conferences and recorded multiple public service announcements during the campaign.

A unique media partnership was a long-form interview with the Millcreek Government Channel in Erie

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PennDOT Modernizes Its Land and Building Inventory

Over the past year, PennDOT's Bureau of Office Services, Facilities Management Division, has been working to modernize the department's land and building inventory.

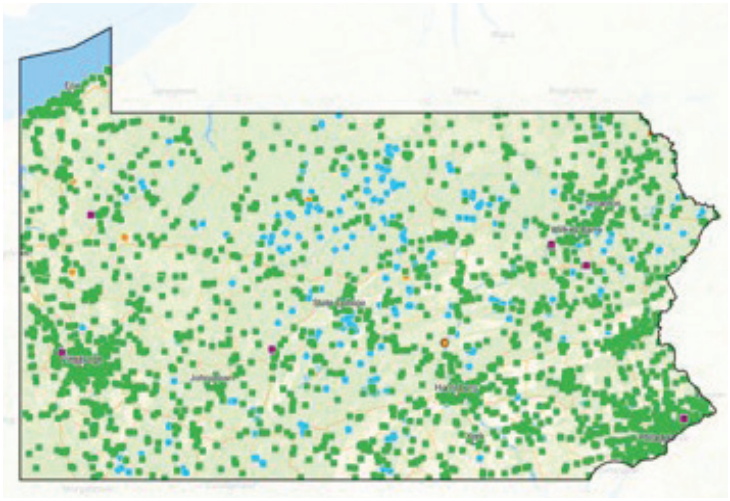
Previously, this information was documented and managed on Excel spreadsheets and manual data collection from the field through Central Office. Today, PennDOT is transitioning that data into a centralized system that will help improve accuracy, reporting, planning and long-term facilities management.

The Integrated Workplace Management System (IWMS) helps organizations manage real estate, facilities, capital projects, and environmental sustainability efficiently. It was designed to manage people, places, and assets in a centralized and integrated manager, allowing companies to manage distributed facilities and complex real estate portfolios.

With approximately 560 locations and over 3,700 buildings and structures statewide, at an estimated value of $1.7 billion, PennDOT fits that description well.

The first step was to verify the accuracy of PennDOT's existing inventory, update the data and upload it into the system. This includes the building systems and assets such as flag poles, security systems and cameras, HVAC systems and the roof-top units and other facility-related equipment.

Next, Facilities Management Staff were trained on how to use the system for consistent updates. A representative from each district was assigned a license and received

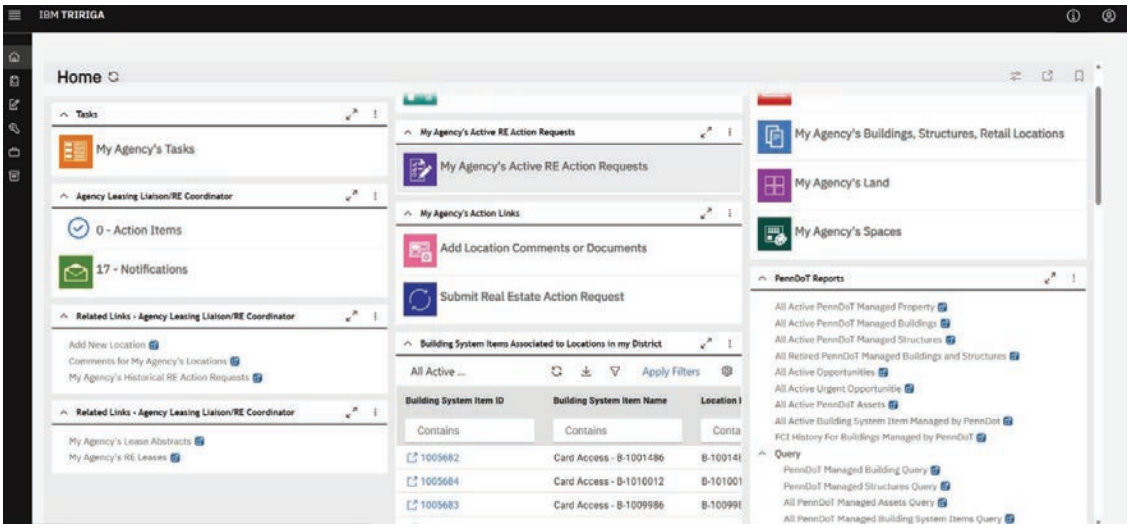


training so they can access the data for reporting purposes.

Later this year, once all Facility Condition Assessments are complete, deficiency data – now known as opportunities – will be uploaded to each building. This will give PennDOT a more complete picture of facility needs and help support future planning and decision-making.

The work does not stop there. PennDOT will continue building on this data and how we can most efficiently and effectively use it to enhance the department's operations.

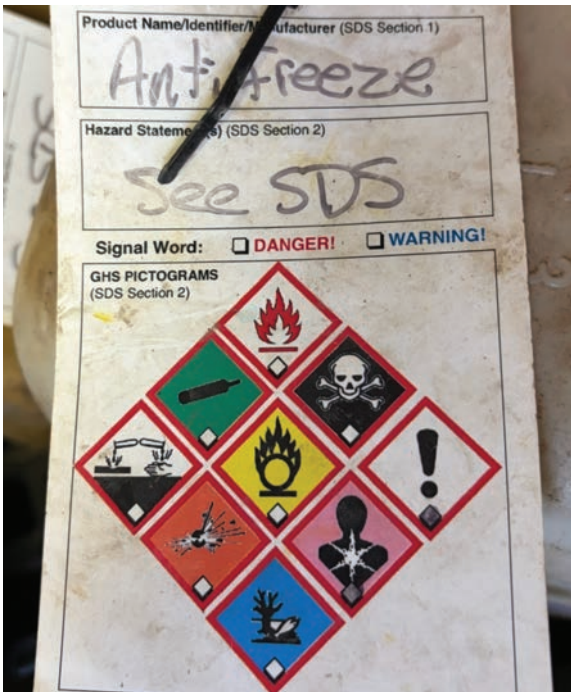
More immediately, PennDOT's land and building data is being used to report information to the public via the Department of General Services Land and Building Inventory website.



This ongoing effort involves multiple teams, agencies, contractors, field staff and Central Office support. It goes well beyond documenting what PennDOT owns. It is about creating a more accurate, accessible and useful system to help manage the department's facilities now and well into the future.

Efficient and Innovative; Strategic Environmental Management Program Drop Down Folders

By District 2 Intern Natalie Reynolds





The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation's District 2 is taking great strides to make a tedious and rather time-consuming process easier to operate and be conducted at the Stockpiles all over the district. Kelly Witterick, an Environmental Planner for District 2, came up with the innovative idea of the Strategic Environmental Management Program (SEMP) drop down folders while conducting spill drills across nine counties. The goal of the spill drills is to ensure that the stockpiles are environmentally sound and that they are following all the compliances at their base location.

Across District 2, there are over 50 stockpiles that operate out of the nine counties. The problem that kept recurring was containers not being labeled properly, which can lead to using the wrong products such as gas in a diesel can or washer fluid in a water bottle not labeled. These materials not being labeled or labeled incorrectly can lead to machine malfunction, extended downtime, and safety hazards. Because this was happening, Kelly started conducting the spill drills to ensure the stockpiles were all understanding of the importance of everything being accurately labeled, what PPE was necessary, and how to clean up spills safely and effectively.

To help the stockpile workers stay organized and be able to pass environmental inspections conducted by central office and third-party audits, Kelly's innovative SEMP drop down folders became more than just a necessity to the stockpiles. These drop folders are hung up at each stockpile in District 2 with each drop folder containing six separate folders with the contents laminated for extra protection. These folders are ordered from top to bottom the important key pages from the Combined Facility Response Plans (CFRP), the previous quarterly report, a folder employees can communicate with SEMP, Globally Harmonized System (GHS) blank labels as well as labeling guides, some FYI and “good to know" information sheets, and blank forms. With both SEMP contacts listed at the bottom of the folders if a stockpile has any questions or concerns. These folders contain all the information that would help stockpiles be ready for an unfortunate spill or emergency, along with who to contact and what protection measures should hazards present themselves.

“I believe the SEMP folder project is vital because it empowers our team to take ownership of environmental safety making a real difference by providing clear, hands-on guidance" Kelly stated. “To better support our busy field staff, providing efficient tools like our SEMP drop folders helps them minimize searching time by making critical documents available right at their fingertips. These drop folders also help field staff by providing easy printed access to prior inspections and information pages to help them track deficiencies and for essential GHS labeling information they may need at their stockpile. Through SEMP, we are embedding environmental stewardship into every stage of our operations. Ensuring Pennsylvania's transportation system is both resilient and sustainable for the long term."

District 2, Highway Safety Network Partner with Virginia Tech to endorse 'Sharing the Road with Trucks'

By Steve Harmic, Community Relations Coordinator, District 2



Photo by Steve Harmic

Proving traffic safety knows no borders, the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI) has hauled a truck load of valuable safety lessons across state lines into Pennsylvania. Two years ago, professionals in the VTTI Sharing the Road with Trucks program arrived in PA via District 2, delivering their evidence-based community outreach program that conducts hands-on safety demonstrations, teaching key strategies for safely interacting with tractor-trailers and other large trucks on the highway.

Sharing the Road Team Leader Scott Tidwell recalled originally meeting Highway Safety Network Deputy Director Tara DeStefano at the Governor's Highway Safety Association (GHSA) Annual Conference, where he introduced her to his program. Once Destefano shared news about the program with her staff, District 2 Community Traffic Safety Project Coordinator Josh Woods got to work forming a partnership with Virgina Tech.

"Josh was instrumental in bringing us to PA," Tidwell said. "I initially met Tara at GHSA, and she passed along our info, which Josh jumped on to bring us to his district."

Woods shared, "It's a really impactful program, and I just saw the value in it right away. We offer traffic safety education on a wide variety of topics, from aggressive, to impaired, to distracted, and more, but nobody was really doing anything quite like the Sharing the Road with Trucks program." Woods then set about building connections at high schools to bring the presentation to District 2, which was made possible through funding from VTTI's "Good Neighbor" grant from State Farm Insurance company.

Launched in 2017, the goal of the program is to educate drivers of passenger cars on how to safely navigate highways in the presence of commercial vehicles. Strategies include safe passing, avoiding blind spots, and maintaining a safe following distance, among others. This is accomplished with a blend of classroom presentations, videos, and a hands-on outdoor portion featuring an actual 18-wheeler. The Sharing the Road team stages the truck with cars, bicycles, human-sized cardboard cutouts, and other props surrounding it. When students are permitted to climb into the driver's seat of the truck it is revealed that none of the objects can be seen from the driver's perspective, even with the use of mirrors. This demonstrates the various, large blind spots professional drivers experience. Additionally, PennDOT and HSN personnel facilitate a lesson on the dangers of distracted driving as classes, broken into groups, rotate through different stations in the course, highlighting the dangers of driving distracted around heavy trucks, and in any traffic situation.

Tidwell said large trucks haul nearly 75 percent of all commodities in the United States, so encountering them is an inevitability. He shared, "We hope all attendees of this program come away with the knowledge and tools to make informed, safe decisions behind the wheel while encountering commercial motor vehicles on our Nation's roadways. The decisions we make not only affect us individually but can affect all road users. Ultimately, don't be scared to drive around trucks, but respect trucks. Never linger or cut them off. In the end, it's a battle you will never win in a passenger vehicle, no matter who is at fault."

Tidwell added that this program was developed by a team of large truck safety experts from the Division of Freight, Transit, and Heavy Vehicle Safety at VTTI. It was in response to research that found passenger vehicle drivers were at fault in 78 percent of crashes and close calls involving large trucks.

Over the past two years, VTTI has conducted 20 school visits and five community events in Pennsylvania. While schools, particularly driver's education programs, provide a fitting audience, professionals at VTTI say the information they share is valuable for people of all ages.

"All road users will benefit from this program," Tidwell shared. "However, about 75 percent of our events are conducted at high schools, reaching our teen drivers.

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Potter County Crews Come to the Rescue

By Timothy Nebgen, Community Relations Coordinator, District 2



While there's never an ideal time or place for your car to break down, during the Monday morning commute at the intersection of Chestnut and Main Street along Route 6 in Coudersport Borough is the farthest thing from ideal. With an average daily traffic count of more than 7,700, the intersection is one of the busiest in all of Potter County.

It was in these less-than-ideal circumstances Stacie Lentz found herself on May 18 as she made her way to work at UPMC Cole. As she was passing through the intersection, one of her wheels separated from the vehicle, leaving the vehicle disabled at the busy intersection.

To that point, luck hadn't been much of a lady to Lentz that morning, but her fortunes were about to improve. It so happened that Shon James, a Highway Foreman with PennDOT's Potter County Maintenance Division, and his crew were on their way to fuel up for the day's planned maintenance activities. As they approached the busy intersection, they saw Stacie's vehicle and sprang into action.

James called another foreman, Joe McDowell, and his crew for assistance. One crew closed a lane and provided traffic control while the other busied itself with putting on the spare. Crew needed to use one lug nut from each of the other wheels as the others were ruined.

Once they had the spare on the vehicle, they were able to move it into a vacant lot and Lentz got a ride to the office with a family member. All told, the whole affair was wrapped up in the span of about 15 minutes.

Later that morning, Lentz reached out via telephone to let her rescuers know how appreciative and grateful she was for the assistance and to say that our employees are wonderful. District 2 Executive Thomas Prestash also echoed those sentiments by sending letters to everyone who aided Lentz that morning, including James and McDowell along PennDOT CDL Operators Scott Bundy, Tim Fisher, Todd Langan, and Colby Swartz.

“It's nice to be appreciated," James said.

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We feel it is important to start with our young, novice drivers to hopefully instill good, safe driving habits from the beginning, before they learn bad habits that could cost them their lives. With that said, this program does benefit drivers of all ages and experience levels because even adult drivers do not necessarily understand the physics of large trucks, or just how big the blind spots are around a truck until they get into to driver's seat and see it firsthand."

Mike Wilson, the safety and driver education teacher at Bellefonte Area High School, was among the first educators in Pennsylvania to welcome VTTI to his school. Wilson said, “Sharing the road with trucks is a wonderful and unique experience for my classes, thanks in part to Virginia Tech, State Farm, PennDOT, and the Highway Safety Network. I hope my students gain the knowledge and respect for these larger semi-trucks on our roadways. If they are not already, they soon will be sharing the road with these trucks. Everything from no zones, following distance, turn radius, and tail wind are all important and key takeaways from the presentation. I feel the program is presented very well, with the information coming from CDL Drivers. My background in Fire/EMS also adds a unique perspective in that I have seen the extreme consequences of not sharing the road with these trucks appropriately. I want my students to be proactive, rather than reactive, when it comes to driving in any traffic out on the roadways."

Tidwell said the program is growing and has currently reached 21 states. Several safety press officers in other PennDOT Districts have reached out to him about bringing the program to more parts of Pennsylvania. He would eventually like to have a presence in all 50 states.

For more information, visit https://cmvroadsharing.org/ or contact sharingtheroad@vtti.vt.edu.

Former Civil Engineer Trainee Micah Kurtz Shares His Experience

By Desiree Koser, Communications Assistant, Central Office



PennDOT offers many opportunities across the Commonwealth to become a Civil Engineer Trainee (CET) in a 12-month on-the-job training program designed to develop skills in the field of civil engineering. Micah Kurtz, who recently completed the CET program, began his current position as Civil Engineer on June 22, 2026. He originally found interest in this career through high school engineering classes but eventually decided a civil engineering concentration would be the best fit.

Starting in July 2025, Micah had the opportunity to rotate through all PennDOT departments and enjoyed learning about the complexities of other positions. He found himself in meetings, working with the traffic signal team, and sometimes programming or conducting field work. He reports that communication challenges can often arise, but it was a very positive learning experience overall. He has really taken a liking to the construction side of things, especially bridge inspections and highway safety. He was able to make suggestions to reduce congestion in Dauphin County, and while he was part of this project, he was shocked to find out how much technology is involved with monitoring traffic flow.

The highlight of his CET program was the summer of 2025's bridge reconstruction when he thoroughly enjoyed getting his hands dirty! Throughout this process, he says asking a lot of questions, taking note of new experiences, and continuing to push for new ideas have been very beneficial to the expansion of his knowledge. During his joyous days revolving around crash prevention and traffic intersection improvement, the only pick me up he relied on was water. There's nothing better than a natural liquid to fuel a creative fire!

If Micah Kurtz was to summarize his overall experience, he says eye opening is too cliché and instead lands on vast. The skills he added to his tool belt from the CET program are almost unimaginable to a younger version of himself. As far as advice goes, during such a hands-on experience he believes it is crucial to get a feel for what interests you and then nudge yourself in that direction to maximize your résumé.

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County. The 15-minute video podcast was done alongside a representative from the Highway Safety Network and included a discussion on the importance of prioritizing safety when walking or driving.

While the communications plan is considered a success based on its measurable goals, its true impact on crashes in the area will be revealed in data over the next several years.

PennDOT crash data indicates there were 84 pedestrian-related crashes in District 1 last year, which is a reduction from 91 in 2024. Fatalities also saw a slight downtick from 11 in 2024 to 10 in 2025.