



BETTER COLLABORATION

TRANSFORM

BETTER COMMUNITIES



The latest news and information from PennDOT Connects' network of people and places

PennDOT Connects June 2025 Newsletter

PennDOT Connects helps transform SR 356 over Pine Run project with safety-driven upgrades

Beginning as a bridge replacement, the Pine Run project ended as a full-scale safety enhancement project for PA 356 thanks to PennDOT Connects and community collaboration. Initially, the project aimed to replace the aging bridge structure that carried PA 356 over Pine Run in Allegheny Township, Westmoreland County. However, discussions with municipal officials quickly revealed a larger issue. After inspection, significant congestion and safety concerns were cited at an outdated intersection just east of the bridge.

“We knew the bridge needed to be replaced, but local officials pointed out that we also had an opportunity to fix a long-standing traffic problem,” said Josh Theakston, transportation planning specialist supervisor for PennDOT District 12-0. “That’s where PennDOT Connects really made a difference, allowing us to take a broader approach to improving the area.”

To address the issue, PennDOT integrated a modern roundabout into the project. This replaced the older intersection, improving traffic flow and reducing the likelihood of severe crashes.

“Roundabouts are proven to enhance safety by slowing traffic and reducing conflict points,” Theakston said. “We knew this was the right solution, even though it increased the overall project cost.”



The intersection (facing south) prior to construction of the roundabout.



The roundabout (facing north) under construction.

While the incorporation of a roundabout required extensive coordination between PennDOT, local officials, and the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC) and a heightened budget, the end result was a safer more efficient roadway.

The project, as Theakston says, was more than just replacing a bridge. The main goal was to enhance the functionality of the entire corridor, making it better suited for long term sustainability. By listening to community input and working together, the deliverable will be a solution that not only improves safety and traffic operations, but benefits drivers for years to come.



The completed roundabout at end of first construction season.

The PA 356 over Pine Run project stands as an example of how PennDOT Connects fosters community-driven transportation improvements. As always, the top priority is ensuring infrastructure upgrades meet the broader needs of the people who use them every day.

For more information on PennDOT Connects and how it benefits communities, visit the [website](#).

Tech Sheet #21 Road Safety Audit

Looking for information on a Road Safety Audit (RSA) – one that could potentially be shared with elected officials? The Road Safety Audit tech sheet describes what an RSA is, the statistics on how they can improve safety, and the steps involved in doing an RSA.

The tech sheet is on the [PennDOT Connects webpage](#).

[Tech Sheet #21 Road Safety Audit](#)



PennDOT Connects provided a drop-in on the RSA in April. The link for the recording is below.

PennDOT Connects Municipal Outreach Educational Opportunities

Go to the [PennDOT Connects webpage](#) to learn about upcoming educational opportunities. Click the down arrows next to the Drop-Ins and Workshops tabs to view the current offerings and past sessions.

Recorded Drop-Ins

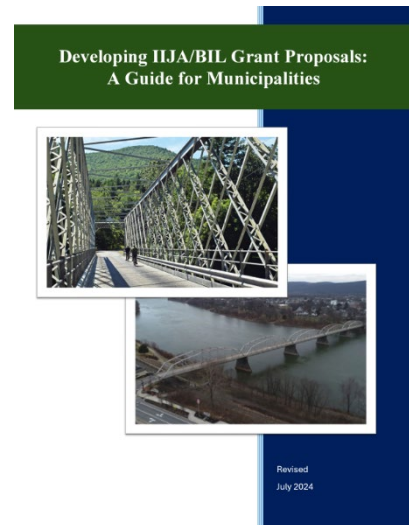
[Road Safety Audits; A Proactive Safety Tool](#)

Unfortunately for most communities, road safety is a reaction; a reaction to a tragic event that just happened on one of your roads. While improvements after that tragic event will help at that location, the next tragedy will likely be at another location. How can your community get ahead and prevent that next tragedy from happening? By using proactive, proven safety processes that identify risks and take action before the crashes occur. These methods include developing a local road safety

plan, road safety audits, and a systemic approach—all part of the safe system approach. This webinar discussed Road Safety Audits, and how they can be used in your community to identify potential safety risks, and deploy proven, low-cost safety measures to prevent future tragedies before people are hurt.

Guide for Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act Grant Applications

PennDOT has added a [guide for grant applications](#) to the website dedicated to the IIJA, and specifically the federal discretionary programs. Also, included are Grant Alerts that provide background on these opportunities including eligibility, application deadlines, and federal and Department of Transportation (USDOT) resources and guides to assist in applying for the specific programs.



Grants Resources

USDOT Discretionary Grant Resources

The USDOT has developed a discretionary grant preparation checklist for federal fiscal year 2024 to help applicants prepare and chart a strategic pathway to apply for infrastructure investments. More than \$32 billion is available to the USDOT this fiscal year to provide competitive grant funding to local governments, metropolitan planning organizations, transit agencies, Tribal governments, U.S. Territories and state departments of transportation. The USDOT has published a list of anticipated dates for the upcoming Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFOs) for key programs within the IIJA and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), as well as adjacent programs that support IIJA and IRA objectives. This list is not comprehensive, and the agency will periodically update it with additional programs and revised dates as appropriate. Both resources can be found on PennDOT's IIJA page at <https://www.pa.gov/en/services/pennidot/apply-for-pennidot-infrastructure-and-jobs-act--iija--grants.html>.

USDOT Navigator: <https://www.transportation.gov/dot-navigator>

Federal Transit Administration IIJA Website: <https://www.transit.dot.gov/IIJA>

DOT Competitive Grants Dashboard: <https://www.transportation.gov/grants/dashboard>

FREE Transportation and Land Use Planning – One-on One Assistance and Training

PennDOT Connects Municipal Outreach offers **free** one-on-one assistance and training to municipalities to better integrate local land use development and transportation goals into the state transportation planning process.

Any municipal staff member, government official or planning partner is eligible to request **free** planning assistance or personalized training. Simply fill out the PennDOT Connects Municipal Outreach Training/Assistance request form by [clicking here](#). If you answer yes to any of the questions below, reach out to [PennDOT Connects Municipal Outreach for assistance](#).



- Are you involved with municipal land use and transportation planning activities?
- Could your municipality use assistance to help shape future land use or transportation projects?
- Would you like to learn how to advance your community's planning and transportation-related goals?
- Have you heard about PennDOT Connects, but would like to know more about the free training and assistance available to your municipality?

PennDOT Connects helps local governments and regional/municipal planning organizations consider community needs during the planning process. Examples include:

- Safety issues/concerns
- Bicycle/pedestrian accommodations
- Transit/multimodal considerations
- Stormwater management
- Presence of/impacts from (current/future) freight-generating land uses
- Utility issues
- Transportation operations considerations
- Emergency services accommodations
- Planned development
- Long-range transportation plans
- Regional planning studies (e.g., corridor studies, resource management studies, watershed studies, etc.)
- Consistency with current community comprehensive or other plans
- Consistency with current and/or proposed zoning
- Other proposed transportation improvements
- Impacts on the natural, cultural, or social environment
- Right-of-way considerations
- Anticipated public opinion
- Community or cultural events in the candidate project area
- Maintenance Agreement requirements

Do You Know Your MPO or RPO?

PennDOT and its Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Rural Planning Organization (RPO) partners have a long-standing relationship jointly preparing transportation studies, plans, and programs to make the best transportation project investments possible with available resources. This strategic alliance is now of even greater importance for PennDOT Connects implementation. Together, the MPO/RPO planning partners and PennDOT can effectively collaborate and communicate with municipalities — and other community stakeholders (e.g., transit operators, economic development agencies, etc.) — to improve transportation system performance and achieve more livable communities. The collaborative effort of municipalities, MPO/RPO planning partners, and PennDOT is key to ensuring that opportunities to improve transportation and communities are realized.

MPO/RPO contacts can be found [here](#). Use the “Sort & Filter” button to find your contact(s).

PennDOT Connects

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation is committed to bettering our transportation system and our communities through collaborative planning. We must find creative solutions to sustain and expand mobility throughout the commonwealth. This means improving our planning process to reflect changing demographics and technological innovation. We are broadening the benefits we deliver and taking a more holistic approach to planning. We are tasking PennDOT staff and our planning partners to consider community needs at the beginning of the planning process to ensure the best allocation of our resources. This approach, PennDOT Connects, will make our planning processes more efficient and cost-effective to the benefit of all Pennsylvanians.

PennDOT Connects Newsletter

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Pennsylvania Department of Transportation PennDOT Connects Municipal Resources

www.pa.gov/agencies/penndot/research-planning-and-innovation/penn-dot-connects.html

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Pennsylvania
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