

Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission

2200 North Center Avenue • New Stanton, PA 15672-9602 • (724) 755-5260 • (724) 755-5142 fax

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Thomas A. Fox
(724) 755-5260, (724) 755-5142 fax
e-mail: tfox@paturndpike.com



KEY SOUTHERN BELTWAY COMPONENT BETWEEN FINDLAY CONNECTOR AND INTERSTATE 79 RECEIVES FEDERAL APPROVAL, ADVANCES TO FINAL DESIGN

Environmental clearance has been issued for the 13.3-mile project that would extend the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission's Southern Beltway system south and east from the Turnpike 576 terminus at U.S. Route 22 in Robinson Township, Washington County to a new interchange with Interstate 79 at the Allegheny-Washington County line near the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' National Cemetery of the Alleghenies.

The U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) signed the Record of Decision for the estimated \$660 million project on Wednesday, Sept. 3.

FHWA's action formally designates the B-2 Alternative as the **Selected Alternative** and allows the Turnpike Commission to proceed with final design and right-of-way acquisition. Final design, which includes the completion of right-of-way requirements, is the detailed engineering necessary to advance the project to construction.

"This component of the proposed beltway system would establish a seamless, 20-mile expressway connection between I-79 and Pittsburgh International Airport and an important transportation link into the airport corridor from key locations in Allegheny and Washington counties," said Turnpike Chief Executive Officer Joe Brimmeier.

Brimmeier noted the Turnpike already has contracted with three engineering firms (Mackin, Greenhorne & O'Mara and PB Americas) for final design services and that the commission also has approved a two-year agreement under which Orion Land Services of Apollo, PA will serve as its agent for the acquisition of required right-of-way.

Orion Land Services is expected to open a local field office in the near future and will begin formal notification of affected property owners and residents. The right-of-way acquisition process likely will begin in the Fall.

The B-2 Alternative traverses Robinson Township, Cecil Township, and a small piece of Mount Pleasant Township in Washington County, and South Fayette Township in Allegheny County.

In addition to the interchanges at U.S. Route 22 and I-79, interchanges on the B-2 Alternative would be built at a relocated Beech Hollow Road, at a new connector road between PA Route 980 and Fort Cherry Road and at a relocated Cecil-Sturgeon Road that would provide access to PA Route 50 via a relocated Cecil-Reissing Road.

Improvements east of I-79 in Cecil Township, Washington County would include the construction of turning lanes at the intersection of Baker Road and Morgan Road and work on Morganza Road to accommodate new ramps that will connect it directly to the Southern Beltway and I-79.

The purpose of the project is to enhance transportation mobility and safety and to serve and support existing and planned growth in a corridor south and west of the Pittsburgh regional hub by improving access and the movement of people and goods.

Estimates based on preliminary engineering performed during the environmental study phase of the project show approximately 105 residential displacements (including 72 in Cecil Township and 21 in South Fayette Township) and approximately 11 business displacements.

Other estimated impacts of the project include 92 acres of productive agricultural lands (62 of which are used for temporary grazing) and 72 separate wetland sites encompassing 7.45 acres of wetlands.

As they fine tune the Selected Alternative, engineers will try to further reduce or avoid environmental impacts.

Traffic volumes on the new tolled expressway are estimated at close to 30,000 trips per day by 2030.

"We believe this roadway will attract more vehicles more quickly than any of the Turnpike Commission's post-1990 expansion projects in the Pittsburgh region," Brimmeier stated.

"The sooner this roadway gets built the better," he added. "When opened, this project will take a lot of pressure off of the I-79 Bridgeville interchange and will reduce traffic significantly on overburdened and undersized highways like Route 980."

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