

State of the Region 2006

9th Annual Regional Transportation Conference

On October 28th, GVF Transportation hosted its 9th Annual Regional Transportation Conference at the Crowne Plaza hotel in King of Prussia, PA. The goal of the conference is to provide attendees with the latest information on transportation and land use issues affecting southeastern Pennsylvania. It provides a forum in which information can be shared and discussed among the various leaders in the transportation industry.



Sharon Daboin and John Coscia



Steve Lester and Sara Holcombe



After a brief welcome and conference overview from Steve Lester, Vice President of Urban Engineers and GVF Transportation Board President, the conference kicked off with John Coscia, Executive Director of the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC). John's presentation focused on the commission's regional planning initiatives. John noted that vehicle growth is outpacing population growth in large numbers and that the amount of cars on the region's roadways is increasing at a fast pace. One of the leading causes of this trend is that more people are commuting within the Philadelphia suburbs as opposed to prior trends that showed more of a city suburb to city commute. In order to address the transportation needs of the region, John described the transportation goals as: improving safety, reducing congestion, increasing mobility, enhancing the environment, rebuilding the infrastructure, and linking



Joseph Brimmeier

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transportation investments to the region's land use and economic development goals.

Following John's presentation was Congressman Jim Gerlach who provided a status update for the Schuylkill Valley Metro project. Congressman Gerlach stated that, "the next three to four months is the time period to come forward with a recommendation" concerning the metro project. Congressman Gerlach noted the consultants are meeting to try to reach the Cost User Benefit ratio from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) standards and that they are trying to "take a Cadillac and make it into a really good Chevy." Congressman Gerlach expressed how important this project is to the region and that he will continue to work to find a resolution to this matter.



Charles Idell

Continuing on the theme of regional transportation, Rich Burnfield, Senior Director for Budgets for SEPTA, provided an overview of the organization and its Capital Program. SEPTA is a multi-modal operation that operates over 2,800 vehicles and provides 299 million trips annually. Rich noted that SEPTA's Capital Program consists of: bringing the existing system to a State of Good Repair, providing for the Normal Replacement of Assets, pursuing System Improvements, and planning for System Expansion. Rich's presentation consisted of various projects throughout the region that SEPTA hopes will enhance the competitiveness of the region as a place to work, live and visit.

Charles Isdell, Executive Director of the Philadelphia International Airport then took the podium. Charles' presentation focused on the recent work done at the airport and the proposed runway expansion. Charles noted that the airport has a \$14 billion regional impact and also employs 34,000 individuals through 200 employers on the site. He highlighted the proposed Terminal D/E expansion, which is the first

major renovation of two 1970's era terminals. The \$185 million project will provide rotunda-style concourses with three new aircraft gates in addition to luggage and security improvements.

Turning the focus to our roadways, Joseph Brimmeier, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission, provided the conference with an update on current turnpike initiatives and how the recent strike affected the commission. Joseph explained that 100 percent of the toll increase revenue is going to rehabilitation of the turnpike. He also noted that the turnpike commission is discussing the idea of leasing the current rest stops to a private company in order to have them updated and modernized with new features.

A new topic was featured at this years conference. The issue of Goods Movement in Pennsylvania as discussed by Sharon Daboin, Deputy Secretary for Aviation, Rail Freight, and Waterways from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. Sharon noted that freight traffic is increasing and that the public is unaware of the steps for delivering goods to consumer markets. Sharon stressed that goods movement needs are not adequately

incorporated in the way transportation systems and development are planned and built.

The next issue addressed at the conference was an update on the transportation priorities of Montgomery and Chester counties. Leo Bagley from the Montgomery County Planning Commission provided an overview of the county's priorities for the 2007 TIP update. Leo touched on a few of the projects that are a priority to Montgomery County, they are: the Lafayette Street Extension/Interchange project in Norristown, the US 422 River Crossing complex, the PA 309 Expressway and US 202. Included in his presentation was an overview of the proposed improvement to US 200 section 700.

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Congressman Jim Gerlach, from DC via live video connection.

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Following Leo was Lee Whitmore of the Chester County Planning Commission. Lee discussed the priorities set by the planning commission for the upcoming TIP update. Lee noted that the Paoli Transportation Center was a top priority for the county and said it would be a great asset to the county's transportation infrastructure. Other projects Lee touched upon included US 202 improvements, the reconstruction of US 422 in the Pottstown area and improvements to PA 100. Both presenters stressed that transportation systems impact revitalization and guides community health and the economic well-being of the area.

A highlight of the conference was the presentation of the 2005 Transportation Leadership Award to US Senator Rick Santorum. He received the award in recognition of his dedicated and tireless efforts in securing significant federal funding for the US Route 422 River Crossing highway improvement project and his preservation efforts at the Valley Forge National Historical Park. Sara Holcombe, Director of Community and Economic Development for the Senator,

accepted the award as he was unable to attend the conference.

Following the award presentation, Congressman Curt Weldon gave this year's Keynote presentation. Congressman Weldon spoke on federal safety initiatives and the new SAFE TEA-LU bill. He addressed the fact that the United States can learn a valuable lesson from Hurricane Katrina when it comes to emergency preparedness and response. He stated that "Hurricane Katrina will cost \$200 Billion" for the United States. He also spoke of a meeting with Tony Blair, UK Prime Minister, after the Tube bombing in London and quoted Blair as saying "In hindsight Scotland Yard could have done more if we were prepared."

Once again GVF Transportation would like to thank our sponsors. Your support allows us to continue bringing the region together to hear what is being accomplished and how we can improve the future. Transportation is critical to our continued economic success and we look forward to working with the region's stakeholders to provide solutions. **AIM**

Making Montgomery County Highways Safer for Everyone...

A firefighter carrying a hose line across a roadway toward a fire is hit by a motorist. A paramedic tending to an accident victim is hit by a car trying to maneuver around the accident scene. A police officer helping a stranded motorist is struck by a passing vehicle. Another vehicle is struck due to a driver not paying attention while approaching an accident scene and tying up the highway even longer. These secondary crashes involving emergency responders and passengers are all-too-common occurrences on our nation's highways.

Recently, GVF Transportation in conjunction with members of the Pennsylvania State Police, Lower Providence Township, local coalitions and DVRPC have developed a highway incident management plan for implementation in Montgomery County. The plan, based on models used in New Jersey and Virginia, provides responders with unified guidelines for operating on the scene of an incident. The goal of the plan is to improve the overall traffic incident management process. At the same time improving the safety of responding agency personnel,

reducing the chance of an associated traffic accident, minimizing the amount of apparatus and the number of personnel responding on the highway.

During the process of developing the incident management plan, fire, police, EMS organizations and county officials have reviewed and commented on the plan in order to reach a consensus on the document. The plan is supported by the fire, police and EMS associations of Montgomery County along with those municipalities that respond to incidents on the area highways. In the coming months, this plan will be disseminated throughout southeastern Pennsylvania with the goal of implementing it as a regional plan.

GVF Transportation would like to thank Corporal John Quigg of the Pennsylvania State Police, Chief Francis Carroll of Lower Providence Township, Dave Brown of Montgomery County Public Safety, and Don Sirianni of Springfield Township for all their hard work and dedication in drafting and implementing this plan. **AIM**

Partner in the Spotlight

The King of Prussia Mall: More Than Meets The Eye

The King of Prussia Mall is known far and wide for its grand scale, modern interior and, of course, its upscale department stores, specialty shops and restaurants. But behind its obvious attractions there's more. Much more. As we'll see, this mall that "has it all" is also a thriving enterprise dedicated to the economic growth of our community and the well being of our residents.

Economy

As the second largest mall in the United States, King of Prussia is an economic powerhouse that employs 6,500 workers who depend on it for their livelihood. At the same time, it contributes over \$1 billion in sales each year to the economy, and plays host to 25 million visitors from around the world who bring significant buying clout with them.

Community

Equally impressive is King of Prussia's "good neighbor" policy with its programs that contribute to the good of the surrounding area and even the nation.

The tragedy of 9/11 reverberates in many aspects of our lives. Particularly the threat we face in public meeting places that attract crowds. Yet, even though malls are typically considered "soft" targets, King of Prussia formed a partnership with several government agencies to hold a simulated bio-terrorism drill on its property. The conclusions drawn from this strategic endeavor helped those agencies and first responders learn how to deal more effectively with disaster strikes and other threats to security. The results were so impressive, in fact, that they were incorporated into an FBI training video as a model for other malls and shopping centers.

King of Prussia's role in this important event was even recognized by the Environmental Protection Agency, which awarded it the 2005 PA Partnership Award in recognition of leadership in anti-terrorist activity. Jon Powell, President of Kravco Simon, accepted this award on the mall's behalf. The mall was further honored by the International Council of Shopping Centers with its Maxi Merit Award for the same effort.

Another issue of national importance is recycling. The mall has instituted a comprehensive recycling program that encompasses customer and tenant recycling of cardboard, glass and plastic bottles, metal cans, office paper and plastic wrapping. This environmental effort was so successful that in 2005 the EPA honored the mall with its Outstanding Shopping Center/Developer Award. Upper Merion Township

also recognized the recycling efforts and honored the mall in 2004 with its Good Neighbor Award.

Transportation

Late in 2005, during the SEPTA strike, the mall, along with the GVF Transportation, provided employee shuttle service to and from the property. This was necessary to keep its tenants doing business and employees working during the strike. Kravco Simon is a founding member of GVF Transportation and has been a strong partner of the TMA for 15 years.

Gift Card

Finally, this past holiday season, the mall partnered with CBS 3 to give away King of Prussia Gift Cards totaling \$30,000 to deserving community members, local

heroes and people in need. This generous gift put smiles on the faces of many needy people.

Partnerships

Look around King of Prussia Mall, today, and you'll see a shopping center with a great tradition and an even greater future. You'll find an array of shiny, new Chevrolet cars and trucks, and signs announcing that this classic American automaker recently became the official vehicle of this classic American mall. In the coming year, you'll also see new construction and expansion as 50 stores, shops and restaurants prepare to open their doors for business. Among them will be such prestigious names as Cole Haan, Lacoste, Sony and Puma.

No matter how you look at it--from the environment it provides for businesses and their workers, to its many award winning socially responsive programs--it's easy to see how The King of Prussia Mall is much more than meets the eye.



National Park Service and FHWA Sign Historic Streamlining Agreement

In a great example of cooperation and innovation, Valley Forge National Historical Park and the Federal Highways Administration worked together to use a powerful new tool for streamlining transportation project approvals. This was the first use of the new procedure for any site managed by the U.S. Department of the Interior.

The project is the reconstruction of the existing SR 422 and SR 23 interchange that lies within the park, as well as a relocation of North Gulph Road in the park. Reconstruction of the interchange will ease congestion on this bear of a road. Relocation of North Gulph Road will convey heavy traffic away from the park gateway. A number of alternatives that would have avoided any Section 4(f) use of park land were identified and considered by PennDOT, FHWA, and Valley Forge NHP. While these alternatives would not have used park land, they also would not have addressed traffic congestion within the park. An alternative that does require use of park land, yet that would provide net benefits to the park, seemed to offer strong possibilities for success.

In this alternative, a portion of existing North Gulph Road in the park would be relocated to the edge of the park, taking with it the congestion and noise of thousands of vehicles per day. Grading and vegetative screening would further ameliorate the sight and sound of traffic. The old right-of-way would be vacated by PennDOT. The benefits to the park include:

- Improved traffic operations and improved access to the park
- Through traffic relocated away from the park entrance and away from the Welcome Center
- Buffering of the view of and noise from traffic
- Improved visibility and access to the Kennedy-Suplee Mansion.

Section 4(f) of the Transportation Act of 1966 generally prohibits the use of park lands for transportation projects unless certain criteria can be met. These are: 1) There is no feasible and prudent alternative to the use of park land, and 2) All possible planning to minimize harm to park land has been undertaken.

Through the years, a thorough but lengthy procedure for review and approval of transportation projects has been



*In first use of new streamlining authority,
Mary Bomar signs letter to FHWA*

developed to carry out NPS responsibilities for protecting park resources and the visitor experience when projects might affect them. This process continues to be appropriate in cases where a project has clear potential to negatively affect park values.

In this case, however, early consultation resulted in informal agreement among the park, FHWA, PennDOT, and stakeholders that the use of park lands for a proposed project would not result in harm; that the project includes all possible planning to minimize harm; and that the cumulative result of the project would be an overall improvement and enhancement of the park.

To address cases such as this, in April, 2005 the FHWA established a streamlined procedure for approving 4(f) uses of park lands when construction would provide a benefit to the lands. This new Nation-wide Programmatic Evaluation calls for excellent inter-agency coordination as well as a simplified approval process delegated to the field level of the agencies responsible for the affected lands.

This project is an excellent test case since it provides clear benefits to the park. No cultural or natural resources would be impacted. Planners estimate that about six months of review time are eliminated through use of the new procedure. As NPS Regional Director Mary Bomar noted when she signed the agreement, “This as an opportunity not only to benefit park resources and visitors, but also to save time and money for the American public.” Ronald Wagenmann, Chair of the US 422 Corridor Coalition and Manager of Upper Merion Township added that “It is a strong example of the transportation partnerships being forged in the region.”

Valley Forge NHP, FHWA, PennDOT, and local governments have actively worked together since 2001 to identify mutually acceptable approaches to the traffic congestion that plagues the park and surrounding region. All relevant federal, state, and local agencies have participated extensively through a steering committee process. A number of proposed projects have been identified and are at varying stages of planning and approvals. This project is part of the River Crossing Complex package of SR 422 projects identified by the working group. For more information, contact Josh Tamarin at jtamarin@gvftma.com.

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PA 309 Construction Update

With 2006 officially upon us, the 309 construction project continues on. Phases of the project are scheduled to be completed this year and another section is ready to get underway.

The southern most section of this construction project (between Paper Mill Rd and the PA 152/Easton Rd Interchange) continues. Traffic is down to one northbound lane and two southbound lanes to permit the construction crews the required space for the widening of the expressway. The southbound on-ramp at this interchange remains closed.

By mid 2006, all construction between the Fort Washington Interchange and Route 73 (Church Rd) is expected to be finished. Currently, this section's northbound and southbound passing lanes are being rebuilt.

The rebuilding of the southbound on-ramp and the northbound on and off-ramps at Route 73 (Church Rd)

keeps these ramps closed. The southbound off-ramp is also under construction, but remains open. The center section of 309 at this interchange is currently being rebuilt as well.

At the PA 309/Pennsylvania Turnpike Interchange the deck of the fly over ramp is being constructed. This should be completed by mid 2006. The temporary rail road bridge is also near completion. Once the deck is complete the rail traffic will be shifted to this temporary bridge so that the actual rail road bridge can be demolished and rebuilt.

Widening of the southbound shoulder continues north of the Fort Washington Interchange around Highland Avenue. Bridge abutments are being constructed for the currently closed Fort Washington and Madison Avenue bridges. These bridges are being lengthened to allow for the widening of the expressway. The Southbound on ramp at Highland Avenue remains closed.



Cheltenham Townships' Emergency Gator which is used on PA Route 309 during reconstruction.

The northern most section of the project, between PA 63 (Welsh Rd) and Highland Avenue, is set to go to bid this summer with construction beginning by the fall.

Also, the Route 73 reconstruction project, which is part of the 309 project, will be completed this year. Currently, only eastbound traffic is permitted between Washington Lane and PA 152 (Limekiln Pike). The other section of the Route 73 project (between Limekiln Pike and Station Ave) was reopened this past October.

Remember, if you are on PA 309 drive safely and don't speed – speeding leads to dangerous conditions for the construction workers and doubled fines for you, the driver, when you get pulled over. Be safe and smart.

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AIM - Americans in Motion, is also available online for your convenience. Simply visit the GVFTMA website at www.gvftma.com and click on "AIM".

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