

Freedom Road Upgrade Project

Improving Safety and Mobility for Beaver County

Issue 1

Spring 2004



Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
Engineering District II
in cooperation with the
Federal Highway Administration

Freedom Crider Safety Project

Local residents are already enjoying the results of a related Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PENNDOT) project. Improvements to Freedom Crider Road east of the project area can be seen from the Tri-County Soccer Complex to PA Route 989. The Freedom Crider Safety Project improved 1.5 miles of deficient state roadway by widening the roadway, straightening curves, improving sight distance, and strengthening bridges. Many of the same design elements will be considered in the Freedom Road Upgrade Project.

Studies Begin for the Freedom Road Upgrade Project

The Freedom Road Upgrade Project is being undertaken by PENNDOT, in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), to improve safety and transportation efficiency in the communities of New Sewickley Township, Freedom Borough, and Conway Borough between PA Route 989 and PA Route 65. The two-lane roadways within the area are characterized by sharp curves and steep grades. Many of the existing roadways in the corridor contain horizontal and vertical curves that inhibit safe travel and restrict some truck movements.

Some of our field crews have already been in the area to gather information. To date, field investigations have included surveying, geotechnical field studies, environmental research, historic analysis, and traffic studies.

Improvement alternatives are currently being developed which include widening existing roads, improving roadway geometry, and constructing portions of new roadway alignments. The development of alternatives consists of the following: preliminary engineering design, an analysis of environmental features, the minimization of impacts to existing homes and businesses, and consideration of community concerns. Throughout the preliminary design process, refinements will be made in order to determine the optimal transportation improvement for the area.



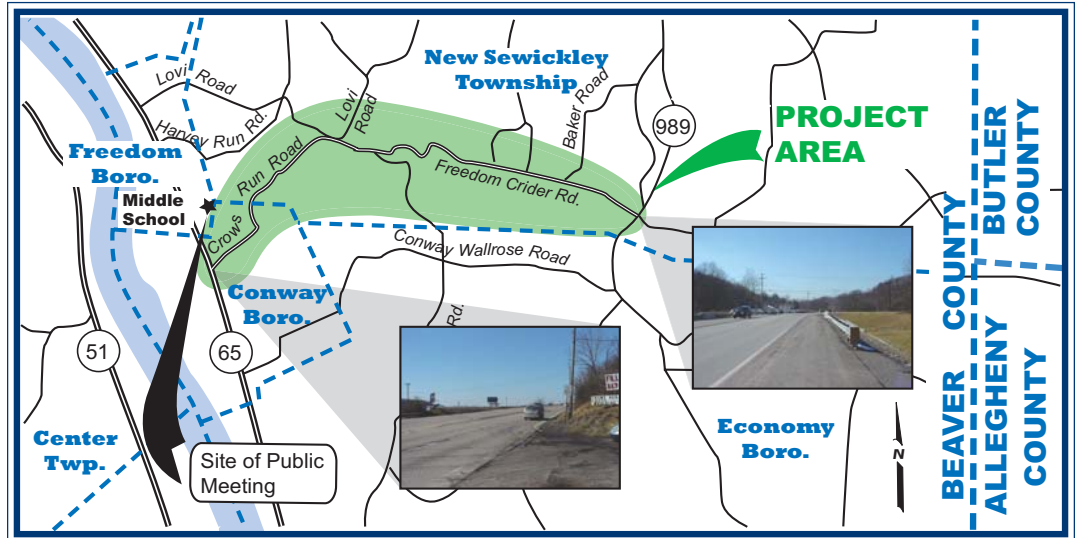
Steep grades along the existing roadway



Narrow bridge and sharp turn near House of Mercy Church

Project Study Area

The study area for the Freedom Road Upgrade Project includes parts of Conway Borough, Freedom Borough, and New Sewickley Township. The roadway corridor suggested for improvement begins at the intersection of Freedom Crider Road (S.R. 2004) with PA Route 989 and extends west to PA Route 65. The study area encompasses parts of Crows Run Road, Freedom Crider Road, Freedom Road, and Lovi Road.



Project Costs

Over the past several months, preliminary cost estimates have been developed for the Freedom Road Upgrade Project. Eighty percent of the overall cost is expected to be funded through the FHWA. The remaining twenty percent will be funded through PENNDOT. As the project proceeds with its environmental and engineering studies, and viable alternatives are identified, cost estimates will also be developed for construction.

Some of the funding for the project has already been programmed on the Southwestern Pennsylvania regional *Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)*. The *TIP* is developed every two years by the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (the region's designated metropolitan planning organization) in cooperation with PENNDOT, each County Commission in our ten-county region, local municipal officials, community leaders, and local public authorities. Projects targeted to receive federal and state aid in our area must be included on the *TIP*.

Although no funds have been programmed in the *TIP* for construction, the project has received sufficient funding commitments to proceed with the current phase of work. The current funding commitments include \$1.5 million for Preliminary Design, \$3 million for Final Design, \$200,000 for Utility Relocation, and \$3.7 million for Right-of-Way. As the project advances through the design phases, it will be necessary to secure the construction funds required for the successful completion of the project. Typically, all funding commitments are not in place until after the preliminary studies begin; so it is not unusual that we have begun work on the project before any construction funding has been secured.

Contacting Us

If you have any comments, suggestions, or questions, feel free to contact either of the project staff members listed below. They can place your name on the project mailing list and answer any questions you may have. You can also contact us through our project website.

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Transportation Project Development and Related Activities

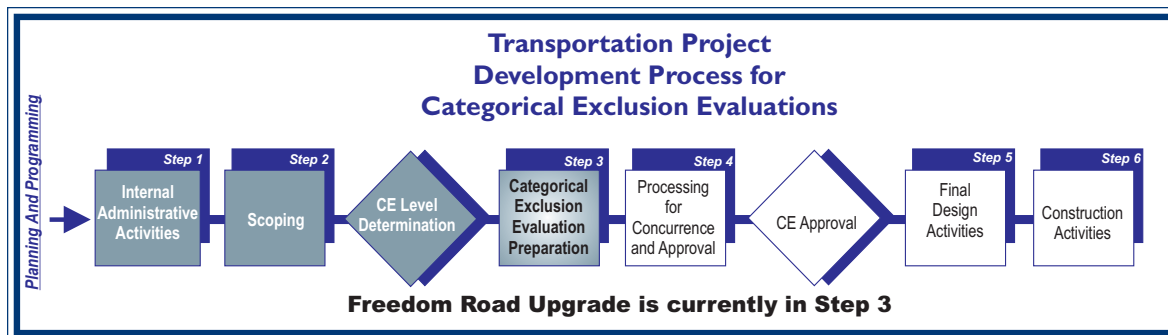
The environmental studies currently in progress for the Freedom Road Upgrade Project are consistent with the development of a Categorical Exclusion Evaluation (CEE). Generally, a CEE can be prepared for roadway modernization projects, like the Freedom Road Upgrade, that may involve the resurfacing, restoration, rehabilitation, or reconstruction of a highway facility with associated environmental impacts.

The transportation project development process for a CEE begins with specific planning and programming activities shortly after the need for a project is identified, and proceeds through analysis, concurrence, and final design phases before actual construction begins. As shown on the accompanying illustration, the Freedom Road Upgrade Project is currently in Step 3 of the process.

engineering team are analyzing the needs of the traveling public and are developing a range of alternatives that could help alleviate transportation problems in the area. The key philosophy guiding our work is to find solutions to transportation problems that balance engineering design with the social, economic, and environmental concerns of the community.

Activities for the current phase of the project include on-going environmental studies, surveying and mapping, preliminary engineering design, the development of various project alternatives, and one public meeting. Much of our preliminary work will be presented at the first public meeting for the project.

At the conclusion of the preliminary design phase, another public meeting will be held. Following a thorough review of our findings, the schedule for final design, right-of-way acquisition, procurement of all required permits, and construction activities will be determined. Based on past experience with other



Preliminary design for the project began late last summer and is expected to take approximately eighteen months. During preliminary design, members of our

similar projects, these later phases of the project will take approximately two years. Actual construction of any new roadway alignment could begin as early as 2007.

You're Invited!

Freedom Road Upgrade Project Public Meeting and Open House

When: Wednesday, May 12, 2004
Where: Freedom Area Middle School
Cafeteria, 1701 Eighth Avenue
(Bulldog Drive)
Time: 5:30 PM to 7:30 PM

Formal Presentations at 5:45 and 6:45

All area residents, business owners, community groups, and other interested citizens are invited to

attend our first public meeting for the project. The meeting will be presented in an open house format with two identical formal presentations. This will allow individuals to learn about the project at their own pace.

Several staff members will be available to explain the project, answer your questions, and take your comments.

Anyone requiring special accommodations at the meeting or needing special assistance to attend this meeting, please contact us!

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Look inside for information about the Freedom Road Upgrade Project!

Visit us at www.freedomroadupgrade.com

Our project team is committed to keeping you informed on the direction the project is heading and how it affects not only your community but also the traveling public. One of the ways we hope to accomplish this is through the project website that has been developed for your use. On the website, you will be able to obtain up-to-date information on the project and subscribe to our e-mail distribution list. This list will be used to notify you of updates to the website, and to send you advance notification of public meetings and other items of interest. Your participation is welcomed. (Please note that we will not use your e-mail address for any purpose other than to provide you with notices concerning the Freedom Road Upgrade Project.)

As the project design advances, the proposed roadway alternatives, associated design features, and related impacts will be presented in further detail on the project website, as well as in future issues of this newsletter.

