

Freedom Road Upgrade Project

Improving Safety and Mobility for Beaver County

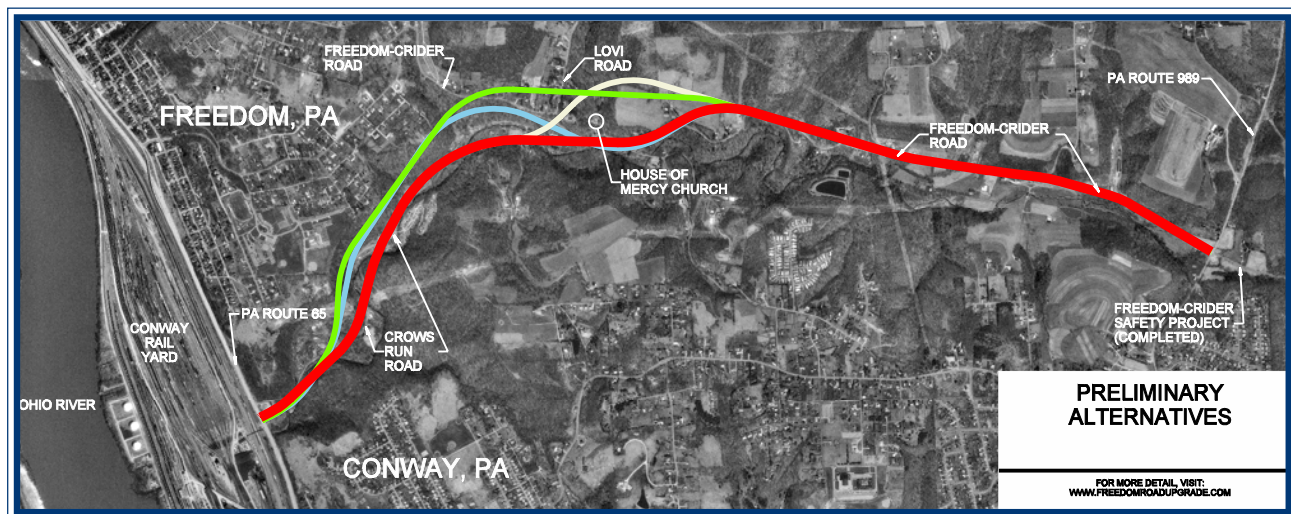
Issue 2

SR 2004, SECTION B06

Fall 2004

We've Narrowed the Range of Alternatives

Five initial preliminary alternatives - the Red, Blue, Green, Tan and No-Build - were developed for the Freedom Road Upgrade Project and presented to the community at the first public meeting held in May 2004.



Since that time, PennDOT has narrowed the range from five alternatives to two alternatives, the No-Build Alternative and a "Build" Alternative. PennDOT is moving forward with the Red Alternative as the "Build" Alternative. This decision is based on the overall engineering feasibility of the Red Alternative; its ability to meet the project need; the level of environmental impact; and the tremendously valuable input received from local public officials, the general public, and state and federal resource agencies.

During transportation projects, the "Build" and "No-Build" options are both carried forward to determine if the project's impacts, costs, and benefits justify the investment of construction funds compared against the option of leaving the roadway in its current condition.

Please note that funds are only in place for the design and right-of-way acquisition for the project. The federal and state funds needed for construction still need to be secured.



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

Funding Status

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 continues to advance, it will be necessary to secure the construction funds required for the successful completion of the project.

Public Meeting Well Attended

There is a great deal of interest in the Freedom Road Upgrade Project, as shown by the high level of participation at the first public meeting held at the Freedom Area Middle School on Wednesday, May 12, 2004. Approximately 90 people attended the public meeting, while 26 public officials attended a special briefing held earlier in the day. Typically, our public meetings do not bring out this many people. This speaks well of the community's commitment to be informed and stay involved with the project.

The meeting's open house format allowed people to learn about the project at their own pace. Two formal presentations were also made by PennDOT. Staff members were available to answer questions and discuss concerns during the open house and after each presentation. The open house format enabled the design team to collect useful data concerning various properties, utilities, existing conditions, and specific safety, environmental, and engineering concerns.



Individual stations were set up at the open house to present general information on the project, maps of the various alternatives, the potential environmental impacts of each alternative, and right-of-way acquisition procedures. All information presented is available on the project website.



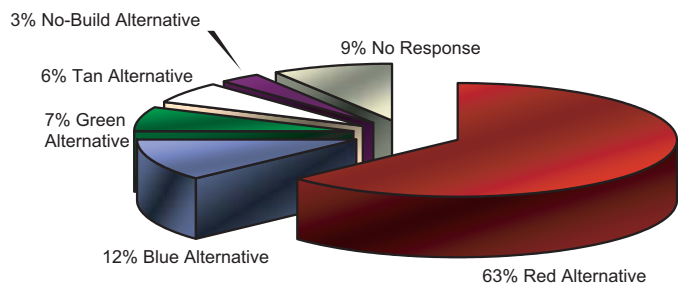
A special thanks goes to all those who helped make the meeting a success - from school officials who offered the use of an outstanding facility at the middle school, to the local residents and elected officials who took the time to meet with us.

Your Input Counts!

Many of you took the time to complete a questionnaire at the May 12th public meeting. **Your input has been a tremendous help to the design team - and we thank you!** Every survey form has been reviewed and discussed by the team. In response to your suggestions and concerns, we've made changes to the design and further investigated the features that you've pointed out to us.

Here's a quick summary of your responses:

- Nearly 75% of the people completing the survey live in the project area.
- Roughly 50% travel between PA Route 65 and PA Route 989 every day.
- There was almost unanimous agreement that transportation improvements are needed to improve safety.
- When asked which alternative would serve the community best, an overwhelming 63% favored the Red Alternative. Next in line was the Blue Alternative with 12%.



- Many people felt existing problems at the Lovi Road and Freedom Crider Road intersection were not adequately addressed by the project. *As a result, PennDOT has added proposed improvements at this location.*
- Several people also expressed concern about their septic systems and common leech fields. *As a result, PennDOT is looking into these issues further.*

Again, many thanks to you for your help!

Accomplishments and Next Steps

Since the range of alternatives has been narrowed, we've been involved in more-detailed engineering, not only to refine the proposed roadway improvements for the thru-traffic, but also for driveways and intersecting roads. Our visits to the project site to look at each driveway and each intersection have been very helpful in addressing property and community access. In response to a major concern voiced by local residents, emergency service providers, and the Freedom Area School District bus service providers, improvements to the existing Lovi Road/ Freedom Crider Road skewed intersection have also been developed.

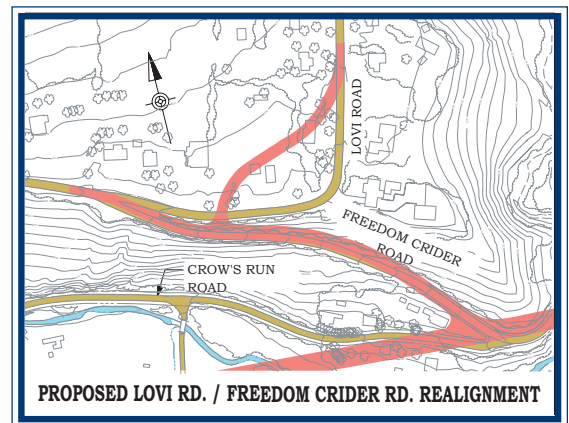
Engineering efforts are also underway for proposed storm drainage, storm water management, culverts and stream relocations, public utility coordination, and construction phasing to minimize disruption of traffic patterns during construction. Initial studies of the existing ground and soil conditions have been completed, but further investigations, involving drilling operations, remain to be done. This work is especially important because of community concern about past underground mining operations and potential erosion and landslide conditions.

Several environmental tasks continue as well. We've completed collecting data on the project area's streams and wetlands. Additional archaeology studies are being conducted and preliminary investigations on the potential impact to emergency management services and local businesses have begun.

In summary, our fieldwork in the project area is continuing, so you will likely see members of our staff working in the area. We welcome your questions and input, so feel free to ask our field staff questions about the work they are conducting or to discuss your first-hand knowledge of the area.

Our current project schedule includes:

- Environmental clearance is planned by Spring, 2005.
- Completion of the preliminary design phase is scheduled by Summer, 2005.
- The second public meeting is to be held at the completion of preliminary design.
- Final design and final right-of-way plan preparation are to begin by Summer, 2005.
- The property acquisition phase could begin as early as Fall, 2005 and would likely take between eighteen months and two years.
- Actual construction could begin as early as 2007.



Archaeology Studies

The upcoming archaeology survey for the Freedom Road Upgrade Project is intended to provide an inventory of all archaeological sites within the project area that are potentially eligible for the *National Register of Historic Places*. These resources, if there are any in the area, could be found through a combination of research, personal interviews, surface survey, and subsurface testing.

Once the survey is completed, a report will be prepared and submitted to PennDOT and the Bureau for Historic Preservation. This report may recommend additional archaeological work if important sites are found. If no sites are discovered, no further investigations will be needed.



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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Look inside for information about the Freedom Road Upgrade Project!

For More Information

If you have any comments, suggestions, or questions about the Freedom Road Upgrade Project, feel free to contact either of the two project staff members listed below.

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Detailed information about the project, including a copy of the preliminary design of the Build alternative, is also available on the project website.

Individuals without Internet access at home can visit their local public libraries for assistance. All libraries within the *Beaver County Library System* provide Internet access free of charge. Maps of the Build alternative will also be available soon at local municipal offices in the project area.

