



PASSAGES

News About the PA Route 23 Environmental Impact Statement

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How to Contact Us:

Mr. Mark Malhenzie
Senior Project Manager
Pennsylvania Department of
Transportation
Engineering District 8-0
2140 Herr Street
Harrisburg, PA 17103-1699
(717) 783-5080

Ms. Deborah Scherkoske
Consultant Project Manager
or
Ms. Lisa Brozey
Consultant Principal-in-Charge
KCI Technologies, Inc.
5001 Louise Drive
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055
(717) 691-1340

or...

Look us up on the Web

www.paroute23.com



Detailed Alternatives Analysis for PA Route 23 EIS Moving Forward

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PENNDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), in partnership with Lancaster County, are currently completing Step 5 of the PENNDOT Project Development Process, which consists of the detailed engineering and environmental analysis of the PA 23 EIS project alternatives. The goal of this phase of the project is to result in a consensus on the alternatives to be evaluated in detail in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

The PA 23 EIS project team has completed an evaluation of each of the nine alternatives presented at the August 2002 Public Meetings. The evaluation consisted of an examination of the alternative's ability to meet the needs of the project, the impacts to the environment, as well as consideration of the views of the public and local, state and federal stakeholders.

Project Needs and Goals

The PA 23 EIS project needs were determined as a result of a Needs Report completed in May 1999. The Needs Report identified seven "key requirements" for the project. Three of those key requirements became the Transportation Needs for the project, and they are:

TRANSPORTATION NEEDS

- Improve Safety Conditions at select intersections and roadway sections that currently exhibit high crash rates;
- Improve Operational Efficiency of the existing transportation system; and
- Accommodate Future Mobility needs for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods.

The remaining four key requirements identified in the Needs Report became the Land Use and Socioeconomic Goals for the project. These goals are:

LAND USE and SOCIOECONOMIC GOALS

- Preserve farmlands, and protect forested lands, water resources, and scenic vistas;
- Facilitate the implementation of the County's growth management strategy;
- Support all sectors of the study area's economy, consistent with the County's growth management strategy; and
- Preserve the viability of social sub groups with unique transportation needs.

A Note from the District Engineer



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

The PA 23 EIS Project Team would like to take the opportunity to extend our thoughts to the community. It is clear that this study area is truly unique in composition, from the most productive non-irrigated farmland in the country and its historic properties, to the distinct modes of transportation and people who have lived here for generations, for those that wish to move to the area to become part of it, and to the business enterprises that provide economic vitality in supporting the community. It is also clear that this creates unique problems and demands, which require unique approaches that we as a team are trying to address.

In planning major transportation improvements we present many new ideas and propose many different approaches to solving the problem at hand. Some of these ideas are often unsettling. Many of you would prefer not to have to consider them. But to fix the problem means that we must propose to change something. We know that these changes are often difficult.

We are now evaluating several preliminary alternatives that would have significant and unwanted impacts. A few of the alternatives under consideration propose to relocate PA 23 to a new roadway, requiring large amounts of farmland. The Southern Alternative currently would require the most farmland. On the other hand, other alternatives such as the Railroad Alternatives and the Widening Alternatives would require the relocation of a large number of residences and businesses, resulting in a loss of community. With any of the approaches, valuable historic resources would be lost. Also, many believe a "do nothing" or a very limited fix approach is not acceptable.

We strongly recognize that the agrarian land and community in eastern Lancaster County is unique and a part of our rich heritage. We wish to preserve these lands and heritage, not to harm them. It is for this very reason that we are ardently working with the municipalities and the county on land use management initiatives as a key ingredient to any of the alternatives and are committed to that approach. We are equally concerned with how we would affect the everyday lives of local citizens. Our goal is to develop transportation solutions that enhance your quality of life, not detract from it.

As our work continues, we will attempt to find the most appropriate balance between addressing transportation problems and minimizing harm to the area's rich resources. It will not be easy and it will not be done quickly. We are, however, steadfastly committed to working with all of you to find the best solution.

We recognize that the best solution may not be a proposal on the board today. Or perhaps it is an alternative under study, but one that needs further modification or refinement. In continuing the open dialogue that began several years ago we will provide you with full, accurate and timely information. In this way you can fully participate in the debate over what is best for the county.

Tell us what you think. We're going to listen.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barry G. Hoffman".

Barry G. Hoffman, P.E.
District Engineer
Engineering District 8

ALTERNATIVES NOT RECOMMENDED FOR FURTHER STUDY

As a result of the evaluation, the project team has recommended that five of the nine alternatives not be advanced further study because:

- they do not meet the project needs;
- they present safety issues and concerns;
- their environmental impacts are severe;
- the alternatives are not supported based on stakeholder and public input;
- the alternatives are not compatible with project land use and socioeconomic goals.

The five alternatives recommended for dismissal are: TSM + Transit Alternative; Widening Alternative, Option 2; Railroad Alternative, 5-Lane North Option; Railroad Alternative, 5-Lane South Option; and Railroad Alternative, 2-Lane, One-Way Pair Option. These alternatives and reasons for dismissal are summarized here:

Transportation System Management(TSM)+ Transit Alternative

The Transportation System Management (TSM) component consists of spot improvements at select areas identified during the preliminary studies. The transit component includes increasing bus frequency and providing additional bus shelters. The reasons for dismissal as a stand alone alternative include:

- Does not add additional capacity to PA Route 23 and therefore does not meet the needs of operational efficiency and future mobility.
- Components of this alternative will be included with all of the other alternatives.
- Received low public support as a stand-alone alternative based on the August 2002 Public Meeting survey results.

Widening Alternative, Option 2 (Continuous shoulders)

This alternative includes a center turn lane and continuous shoulders on PA 23 from US 30 to US 322. The reasons for dismissal include:

- Does not add additional capacity to PA 23 and therefore does not meet the needs of operational efficiency and future mobility.
- Severe impacts to historic resources and impacts a high number of residential and commercial structures.
- Received low public support based on the August 2002 Public Meeting survey results.

ALTERNATIVES RECOMMENDED TO BE CARRIED FORWARD

The PA 23 Team is recommending four alternatives to be carried forward for further study and inclusion in the DEIS, one of which is the No-Build Alternative. All of the remaining build alternatives will include a TSM + Transit Component. The build alternatives and reasons for recommending further study are summarized below.

Widening Alternative, Option 1 (No shoulders in Leola, New Holland & Blue Ball)

This alternative includes adding a center turn lane on existing PA 23 throughout the study area, and adding shoulders along most of the PA 23 corridor, excluding portions of Leola, New Holland, and Blue Ball.

- Although the alternative does not provide improvement in operational efficiency and future mobility, the impacts to historic resources and productive agricultural land are relatively minor, therefore addressing the project goals of preserving farmland and scenic vistas.
- This alternative addresses public and stakeholder concern to make the best use of the existing PA 23 corridor.

Bareville Connector Alternative

The Bareville Connector Alternative follows the Goat Path as a four-lane alignment in the western section of the study area, connects to existing PA 23 as an at-grade intersection near Bareville, and follows existing PA 23 through New Holland and Blue Ball using Widening Alternative, Option 1.

- This alternative does meet project needs by improving operational efficiency and future mobility in the western portions of the corridor.
- Although the alternative has moderate impacts to productive agricultural land and historic resources, there are relatively few impacts to residential and commercial structures.
- The alternative does address stakeholder and public concerns to maximize the use of the Goat Path, and received some public support based on the August 2002 Public Meeting survey results.

Southern Alternative

The Southern Alternative is located south of PA 23 and follows the Goat Path in the western section of the study area, then continues on a new alignment south of Bareville and New Holland to US 322.

- The Southern Alternative meets the project needs by improving operational efficiency, future mobility and addresses safety concerns by providing an arterial in the corridor.
- This alternative does exhibit moderate to severe impacts to historic resources, residential and commercial structures, and productive agricultural land; however, the alternative also provides the most opportunity for minimization of impacts through context sensitive design and design shifts.
- The Southern Alternative received high public support based on the August 2002 Public Meeting survey results, although concerns regarding impacts to residences and farmland have been voiced in association with this alternative.

Railroad Alternative (5-Lane North Option)

This alternative includes completing the Goat Path to the west, and follows a new five-lane alignment north of the existing Norfolk Southern rail line through New Holland to US 322. The reasons for dismissal include:

- Improves operational efficiency; however it introduces safety and operational concerns with additional traffic, and types of traffic, at railroad grade crossings throughout the corridor.
- Severe impacts to historic resources and impacts a high number of residential and commercial structures.
- Received low public support based on the August 2002 Public Meeting survey results.

Railroad Alternative (5-Lane South Option)

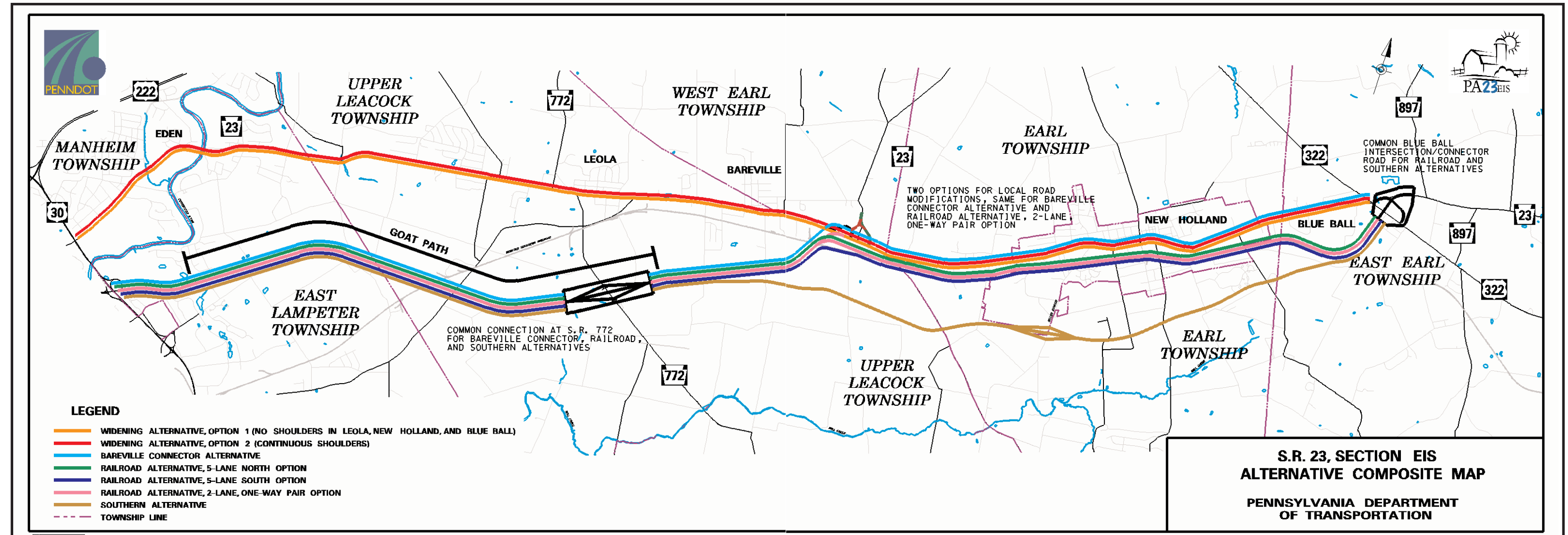
This alternative includes the Goat Path and follows a new five-lane alignment south of the Norfolk Southern rail line through New Holland to US 322. The reasons for dismissal include:

- Improves operational efficiency; however it introduces safety and operational concerns with additional traffic, and types of traffic, at railroad grade crossings throughout the corridor.
- Severe impacts to historic resources and impacts a high number of residential and commercial structures.
- Severe impacts to the New Holland Memorial Park.
- Received low public support based on the August 2002 Public Meeting survey results.

Railroad Alternative (2-Lane, One-Way Pair Option)

This alternative includes the Goat Path and follows a new two-lane alignment north of the Norfolk Southern rail line and connecting to US 322. This new alignment would carry two lanes moving eastbound, while the existing PA 23 would be converted to carry two lanes westbound. The reasons for dismissal include:

- Improves operational efficiency; however it introduces safety and operational concerns with additional traffic, and types of traffic, at railroad grade crossings throughout the corridor.
- Results in circuitous travel patterns, especially for non-motorized vehicles.
- Moderate impacts to historic resources and impacts a moderate number of residential and commercial structures.
- Received low public support based on the August 2002 Public Meeting survey results.



Context Sensitive Solutions

Over the past few months the project team has been concentrating their design efforts on the three alternatives that have been recommended for further study. To balance transportation and mobility needs with consideration of the resources of the project area, engineering requirements are being evaluated to minimize impacts through the use of what is referred to as Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS).

The CSS process includes efforts to avoid or reduce the impacts that the project may have on the socio-economic, historic, and natural resources within the project area. For example, the project team has been able to avoid some direct impacts to residential and commercial areas and historic properties, and has reduced impacts to farmland by shifting the alignments when possible.

Other possible CSS efforts appropriate for this stage of the project may include reducing the width of the median on the Bareville Connector and Southern Alternatives, and making some design changes to more closely follow the contours of the land. In future stages of the design of the project, aesthetic treatments such as landscaping, and the use of specially designed signs and highway lighting appropriate to the setting, would be investigated. It is important to note that the CSS efforts are an ongoing process, and that some CSS elements may be appropriate for some alternatives but not for others.

What Happens Next?

The project team will be conducting the second Land Use Visioning Conference in the next few weeks. The purpose of the Conference is to have the project stakeholders (local, state, and federal agency representatives as well as project Community Advisory Committee members) help to develop land use goals and recommendations for the No-Build Alternative and each of the three build alternatives carried forward for further study.

The project team will be holding a public meeting late this summer. The public meeting will be an opportunity for the project team to present the alternatives carried forward for further studies in association with the land use goals that will be refined as a result of the Visioning Conference mentioned above. Current information about the Eastern Lancaster County Land Use Study (ELCLUS) will also be presented at the meeting.

The public meeting will also be an opportunity for the project team to provide more detail regarding the evaluation of alternatives, an assessment of the environmental impacts of the alternatives carried forward, and a presentation of the project team's CSS efforts to date to avoid, minimize and/or mitigate impacts to the socio-economic, historic, and natural environment. Updated environmental impact information will also be available.

The next public meeting will be announced in the local newspapers and in a postcard mailing later this summer, and also on the PA 23 website at www.paroute23.com

The Pennsylvania Department of
Transportation
Engineering District 8-0
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Harrisburg, PA 17103-1699

