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The SEDA-COG Report

News from the Counties and Communities of Central Pennsylvania
March 2014

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SEDA-COG is a publicly funded development organization based in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania and serving an 11-county region. We help the counties – and the communities and citizens within them – address challenges related to their economies and infrastructure, and we assist them in responding to new opportunities in such areas as energy, technology, market development, transportation, and locally-based resources.

Housing Rehabilitation - Another Key to Healthy, Vital Communities

Maintaining their housing stock is vital to the well being of Central Pennsylvania's communities. Homes in disrepair that don't meet municipal code for health and safety lead to blight and deterioration, with the potential to spread beyond the neighborhood where it's located.

Five counties and eight local municipalities in Central Pennsylvania are helping eligible homeowners preserve their homes with the help of SEDA-COG's housing rehabilitation services. Over 860 homes in the region have been substantially rehabilitated over the last 20 years. Annually, 50-60 homes are rehabbed at a cost of approximately \$1.8 million.

Michael Fisher, who directs [SEDA-COG's housing services](#), stressed that housing rehabilitation is a local program.

"The counties and municipalities secure the funds, often with our assistance. They can contract with us to administer and operate their program, if they choose to do so. The dollars are provided through competitive grants from the



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[Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development.](#)"

SEDA-COG contracts with local construction companies to rehabilitate homes, such as this property in Duncannon.

No more than \$35,000 can be spent on each home, and \$10,000 of that is for [lead-based paint stabilization](#). The first priority is bringing the home up to code. In spite of these parameters, every housing rehab project is unique with the goal of improving the home owner's quality of living. In the case of one South Williamsport client, an access ramp was reconfigured allowing her to more easily maneuver her wheelchair, electrical wiring was upgraded, and vinyl replacement windows installed.

In one Duncannon house, a furnace was installed; the owner had only space heaters to warm his home. Measures were also taken to eliminate stormwater flooding issues behind the property.

An additional benefit of the program is its impact on the communities' economy. Local contractors work on the home, using materials purchased from local suppliers. Over the last 20 years, SEDA-COG's rehabilitation activities have resulted in a \$19.2 million investment in the region.

[View photos](#) on Facebook. [Learn more](#) about SEDA-COG's housing services.



SEDA-COG primarily serves the 11 Central Pennsylvania counties of Centre, Clinton, Columbia, Juniata, Lycoming, Mifflin, Montour, Northumberland, Perry, Snyder, and Union.

Rail Service Growing in Mifflin County

The [SEDA-COG Joint Rail Authority \(JRA\)](#) has purchased 19.5 acres in Mifflin County for future industrial development. The land was sold by the Mifflin County Commissioners for \$66,000, the amount required to pay back taxes and liens against the property.

The property is divided between Burnham Borough and Derry Township, adjacent to [Standard Steel](#). At one time it was used by the steel company and was known as North Yards. Railroad track runs along one border of the property.



Like the Lewistown rail yard, which is four-miles away,

Historic Factoid

1994 – The [SEDA-COG Local Development Corporation \(LDC\)](#) SEDA-COG Local Development Corporation (LDC) for [Small Business Administration \(SBA\)](#) Small Business Administration (SBA) 504 loans expands its service delivery area from 18 counties to 28. As the result of another change, in 2003, the LDC now serves all of Pennsylvania's 67 counties.

the JRA's new property will be served by the [Juniata Valley Railroad \(JVRR\)](#), one of six short line railroads in the Rail Authority's system. Freight service is provided under contract by a private operator.

Along the Juniata Valley RR, looking north toward the newly purchased property.

Since becoming a part of the JRA's system, the Juniata Valley line has enjoyed steady growth. Carload totals have nearly tripled since the rail line's inception in 1996. It currently serves ten customers.

Regarding the new property, Jeff Stover, Executive Director, JRA, said, "There is potential here for rail-served industrial development. This is one of many projects the Authority has undertaken to expand railroad infrastructure in Central Pennsylvania." Specific plans have not been finalized. Stover said some yard tracks and a wye may be installed. A wye track provides a safe way for a railroad to turn locomotives and freight cars, both of which are needed as part of railroad operations.

[Read more](#) about the Juniata Valley Railroad. [View photos](#) on Facebook. [Learn more](#) about the SEDA-COG Joint Rail Authority.

Access to Natural Gas is the topic as Senator Yaw Visits SEDA-COG

[Senate Bill 738](#), introduced in the state legislature last year, is intended to make natural gas service available to more Pennsylvanians. Late last year, the bill's prime sponsor, [State Senator Gene Yaw \(R-23\)](#), paid a visit to SEDA-COG to discuss his proposal and learn more about our organization's efforts to increase the utilization of natural gas.

Although the last few years have seen much activity related to natural gas exploration in Pennsylvania's [Marcellus Shale region](#), about half the wells are not in production. "We have an excess of natural gas in Pennsylvania," said the Senator, "yet half the households in our state don't have access to it."

"My goal," Sen. Yaw said, "is to build a market, and to make natural gas available to those who want it." SB 738, the Natural Gas Consumer Access Act, would require natural gas distribution utilities in the state to submit a

One-question Quiz

Nearly 50 years ago, the Pennsylvania Railroad merged with the New York Central. What was the name of the new rail line?

[Click here for the answer](#)

three-year plan to the [Public Utility Commission \(PUC\)](#), outlining the utility's plans for extension and expansion projects. The PUC would have the option to reject, revise or order the utility to submit a revised plan, and do periodic reviews.



Meeting with staff from SEDA-COG, Sen. Yaw was briefed on our Natural Gas Utilization Initiative.

The bill would also create a system to expedite extension or expansion projects if an economic development agency or a large number of residential, commercial or industrial entities seek to obtain natural gas service. Further, the legislation would allow potential natural gas customers to spread project costs over a 10 year period, rather than full up-front costs that are currently required today. Although the bill has been passed by the Senate, there's been no action in the House.

Like Sen. Yaw's proposal, the [Natural Gas Utilization Initiative](#), which SEDA-COG is carrying out with Centre, Clinton, and Mifflin counties, is intended to make natural gas more accessible for residential, industrial, and vehicular use in Central Pennsylvania. Primary funding has been provided through the federal [Economic Development Administration](#).

Sen. Yaw's proposal and SEDA-COG's Initiative come at the same issue from different directions, but the goal is the same - find a fairly-priced way for people to use this plentiful Pennsylvania resource in their homes and businesses. It is a goal shared by numerous counties, communities, and private companies.

[View photos](#) of the Senator's visit on Facebook. [Learn more](#) about SEDA-COG's natural gas project.

Featured Link

Energizing Small Communities

Published by the [SEDA-COG Energy Resource Center](#), Energizing Small Communities is a how-to manual for America's small, rural towns to develop and implement community-wide conservation programs that reduce reliance on conventional energy sources and help the communities achieve greater economic resiliency. [The manual](#) is based on the [New Berlin Energy Independence Project](#), coordinated through SEDA-COG in 2009-2012.

Financing News . . .

Financing for a machinery and equipment purchase in Lewisburg has been approved by SEDA-COG's Board of Directors. [Timberhaven Log Homes](#) requested a \$97,600 loan through our [EDA-RLF program](#). The project also includes bank financing and cash equity. Last spring Timberhaven purchased the assets of the former Kuhns

Brothers Log Homes. Timberhaven currently has 15 employees and expects to hire more as it grows over the next few years.

\$ \$ \$

The Board also okayed financing for renovations to [State College Veterinary Hospital](#), a loan of \$200,000 through the SEDA-COG [Intermediary Relending program](#). The project also includes bank financing and real estate-based equity. The owner plans to convert existing interior space into additional exam rooms and office space, leaving the building's square footage unchanged. The Veterinary Hospital was established almost 60 years ago. An additional two full-time and two part-time positions are anticipated over the next two years.

For more information on SEDA-COG's [Business Development Financing](#) programs, [e-mail John Reichard](#) or contact him at 570-524-4491, ext. 7251.

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Byte-sized News . . .

The [Williamsport/Lycoming County Chamber of Commerce](#) recently named the [SEDA-COG Joint Rail Authority](#) as one of its Volunteers of the Year for the Authority's part in rail excursions in the Williamsport area. Awards were also presented to the [Lycoming Valley Railroad](#) and [Penn Valley Railroad LLC](#) for their roles. [Details are available here.](#)

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The Rail Authority has two new Board members from Northumberland County – Paxinos resident Don Purcell and County Commissioner Stephen Bridy

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Sojourns on the Susquehanna River are a great way to visit a section of the River you've never paddled before. [Dates have been announced](#) for three sojourns this spring and summer.

#

Registration is now open for our [free online technology training](#). Hundred of courses; thousands of videos.

#

Six counties in the SEDA-COG region are working with PennDOT, [studying the potential for consolidating](#) transit-related administrative services.

When your mom "friended" you on Facebook, you wondered if social media was going mainstream. When your grandmother did, you knew it was. Today, teens, parents and grandparents alike are on social media and the numbers back it up: 72% of all adult Internet users in the

U.S. are active on at least one social network, a remarkable surge from just 8% in 2005.

**What Comes Next?
Social Media Trends for
2014**

Ryan Holmes, CEO
HootSuite

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With funding support from the Susquehanna Greenway Partnership, the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art has improved both the quality and safety of its surrounding trails. More information [is available here](#).

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Training through the [Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs](#) this month includes sessions on [community planning](#) and [zoning](#). Visit the Association's web site for the [full training schedule](#).

Upcoming Events & Activities

Government Contracting Seminars

Bellefonte – Apr. 8

Harrisburg – Mar. 19; Apr. 10, 16, & 23

Williamsport – Apr. 15

York – Apr. 29

Roadway Maintenance & Safety Training for Municipalities

Bloomsburg – May 15

Lewisburg – Apr. 24; May 7; June 12

Northumberland – May 14

State College – Apr. 4 & 17

Turbotville – Mar. 31

SEDA-COG Board of Directors

Lewisburg – Mar. 26

SEDA-COG Joint Rail Authority

Lewisburg – Mar. 12

SEDA-COG Metropolitan Planning Organization

Lewisburg – May 2

For further information or questions about The SEDA-COG Report, e-mail [Steve Kusheloff, Manager, Public Information](mailto:Steve.Kusheloff@seda-cog.org), or call 570-524-4491, ext. 7217.

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