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FEATURED

Transportation projects to cost \$410.5M

By Joe Sylvester/The Daily Item May 26, 2016



LEWISBURG —Transportation improvement projects in an eight-county region of the Central Susquehanna Valley over the next four years will cost \$410.5 million, according to a new report.

Planned construction and maintenance project in the same area over the next 24 years would cost more than \$1.8 billion.

Included in that total is the \$670 million Central Susquehanna Valley Transportation Project, designed to alleviate traffic congestion on Routes 11-15 in Snyder County and Route 147 in Northumberland, but the projects also include funding for bridges, rail and public transit.

Officials from the SEDA-Council of Governments Metropolitan Planning Organization presented an overview of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the Long Range Transportation Plan during a public and information session at the Union County Government Center on Wednesday night. Only one resident attended. Trish Carothers, executive director of the Susquehanna Greenway Partnership, and a former member of the Long Range Transportation Plan committee, inquired about bicycle paths and how more could be included with some of the roadway projects.

The MPO for Clinton, Columbia, Juniata, Mifflin, Montour, Northumberland, Snyder and Union counties, includes representatives from local government, the state Department of Transportation, transit providers and the SEDA-COG, an 11-county economic development agency. The MPO is asking the public for its input on the plans until June 10.

There are 250 transportation projects planned for the eight-county region over the next four years.

“Anything that has federal transportation funds has to be included in TIP,” said Steve Herman, a SEDA-COG transportation planner.

Because the funding is based on the federal fiscal year, the TIP projects are planned from Oct. 1 of this year to Sept. 30, 2020.

State funding will pay approximately 70 percent, or \$292.1 million, of the TIP projects' \$415 million cost, while state funding will make up nearly 30 percent, or \$122.7 million, Herman explained. Local funding will make up less than 1 percent, about \$406,443, of the funding.

The 70 percent in state funding is largely due to the CSVT, Herman said.

In addition to road reconstruction, the projects will include bridge rehabilitation, highway maintenance and safety improvements. Also among those projects are the \$11 million road reconstruction project on Routes 147 and 11 in Northumberland in 2017.

Earlier in the meeting, Rob Watts of McCormick Taylor, the MPO's consultant on the long-range plan, said about 90 percent of the \$792.3 million in projects slated for 2029 to 2040 is to maintain the transportation system.

When Carothers asked if the online listing of projects would show if bicycle paths are included with the projects, Jonathan Ranck of PennDOT's Montoursville District office said people could call the office. Jim Saylor, SEDA-COG transportation planning director, said residents could work with the municipality where there is a road resurfacing project to see if a bike path could be incorporated.

Carothers said afterward it doesn't always have to be PennDOT that funds bike paths. She said no one knew 10 years ago there would be funding from Marcellus shale.

She added, "Because we're so fiscally constrained, there's not always funding for bike paths."

But she was pleased with what she heard at the meeting.

"I think these guys are doing a great job," Carothers said.

The SEDA-COG MPO will consider adoption of the transportation plans at a public meeting on July 15 at SEDA-COG's office near Lewisburg.

Electronic versions of the plans are available for public review at www.seda-cog.org. Paper copies of these documents also are available for review at the SEDA-COG, county government and public transit offices, libraries (Transportation Improvement Program document only), PennDOT offices and other locations throughout the eight-county region.

Residents can submit comments during the public review and comment period to: Mr. Jim Saylor, Transportation Planning Director, SEDA-COG, 201 Furnace Road, Lewisburg, PA 17837. Printed or written comments may be faxed to 570-524-9190, emailed to jsaylor@seda-cog.org, submitted online through the SEDA-COG MPO website, mailed, or dropped off at the SEDA-COG office.

All comments must be received by 4:30 p.m. on June 10 and must include the name and address of the individual submitting the comment(s) to be included in the update process by the SEDA-COG MPO.

Email comments to jsylvester@dailyitem.com. Follow Sylvester on Twitter [@JoepSylvester](https://twitter.com/JoepSylvester)

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