

July 31, 2003

VIA E-MAIL: jclatty@state.pa.us

Jeffrey W. Clatty, P.E.
Senior Project Manager
PENNDOT
Engineering District 11-0
45 Thoms Run Road
Bridgeville, PA 15017

Re: Young Preservationists' Comments on the Route 28 Plan

Dear Mr. Clatty:

The Young Preservationists Association of Pittsburgh welcomes this opportunity to comment on Penn DOT's plans for modifying Route 28 in Pittsburgh, along East Ohio Street in 2007-2010 (SR 0028, Section A09/A10 – East Ohio Street).

Formed in 2002, the YPA is a broad-based regional coalition of dynamic preservation leaders organized to ignite a new historic preservation movement in southwestern Pennsylvania. We encourage preservationists of all ages to get engaged in civic affairs that affects their communities. The YPA believes that history serves as an important guide to motivate and inspire us, and to be a model for how to create good new communities. We must learn the lessons of the past to create a better future.

From the outset, it is not clear why this project is being undertaken. The stretch of Route 28 between East Ohio Street and the 40th Street Bridge is indeed a crowded and often dangerous road in need of repair and maintenance. But one must remember that the 16th Street Bridge is currently under construction, placing more traffic stress onto Route 28 and the 31st and 40th street bridges. In addition, there are few transportation alternatives that appear to be considered—such as light rail that parallels Route 28—which would further lessen the traffic volume on Route 28. If anything, this project illustrates the lack of long-range transportation planning required to reduce the volume and stress on the Pittsburgh area's roads.

Penn DOT seems intent on promoting sprawl by seeking short-term solutions to transportation problems. Should Route 28 be widened and “improved,” it would certainly have the capacity to carry a larger volume of traffic at higher speeds. But at what point would this capacity be overwhelmed? In other words, how wide does Route 28 have to be to accommodate a free-flow of traffic, in five years or ten years?

A study released in 1999 by the Surface Transportation Policy Project (STPP) noted that some of the nation's largest and most expensive road construction projects will save motorists just 30

seconds on the commute when they are completed. Moreover, motorists are losing more time in road work delays than they will save in years of driving on the improved roads. STPP says that road improvements will be offset by increased traffic volume. The report urges states to look to alternative means to ease congestion, including encouraging more bus and rail travel.

Some examples:

- In Springfield, Virginia, an eight-year, \$434 million construction project delays drivers 30 minutes on each rush-hour trip through the massive interchange known as the “Mixing Bowl” because it blends traffic from three interstates. When work is done, drivers will shave about half a minute off their drive through the interchange, from 2 minutes to about 1 ½ minutes.
- In Salt Lake City, a four-year, \$1.6 billion facelift on 16 miles of I-15 will raise average speeds through that stretch of highway only about 1 mph.
- In Trenton, NJ, a driver could spend an additional 250 hours in delays over the course of a three-year project on State Highway 29.
- In Nashville, motorists are delayed 15 minutes because of a \$21 million construction project on I-24. But drivers can expect to cut commutes in half on that part of the highway when the work is done.

The situation is not limited to the United States. Enrique Penalosa, the Mayor of Bogota, discusses how transportation has changed the nature of this Colombian city:

“When I was elected mayor of Bogotá and got to city hall, I was handed a transportation study that said the most important thing the city could do was to build an elevated highway at a cost of \$600 million. Instead, we installed a bus system that carries 700,000 people a day at a cost of \$300 million. We created hundreds of pedestrian-only streets, parks, plazas, and bike paths, planted trees, and got rid of cluttering commercial signs. We constructed the longest pedestrian-only street in the world.” (<http://yesmagazine.org/26courage/ives.htm>)

How soon will it be before Penn DOT is making improvements to the improvements it will make in 2007?

The Young Preservationists Association of Pittsburgh urges Penn DOT to seek longer-term solutions to the Pittsburgh region’s transportation problems. These solutions include the adoption of smart growth principles and multi-modal options for transportation. These principles include the following:

1. Mix land uses;
2. Take advantage of compact building design;

3. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices;
4. Create walkable neighborhoods;
5. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place;
6. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas;
7. Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities;
8. Provide a variety of transportation choices;
9. Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective; and
10. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in developer decisions.

In the short-term, however, it appears that Penn DOT intends to spend millions of dollars to execute one of several alternatives for reconstructing Route 28. Of the choices presented, the Young Preservationists Association of Pittsburgh endorses Alternative 6, with modifications.

Our priorities include the following:

- Preservation of existing historical structures, including the St. Nicholas Church and the Millvale Industrial Park.
- Preservation of existing businesses along Route 28.
- Pedestrian access from the 31st Street Bridge to Rialto Street.
- Pedestrian access along Route 28, between the 40th Street Bridge and 31st Street Bridge. Alternatively, if there were a trail link along the Allegheny River between Millvale and Herr's Island and the North Shore, we would endorse this over a sidewalk along Route 28.
- Preservation of the Troy Hill hillside.

Our comments are consistent with those of Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation and Sustainable Pittsburgh, which also support Alternative 6, with modifications. The Young Preservationists Association of Pittsburgh appreciates this opportunity to comment on the Route 28 plan. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Dan Holland
Chair
Young Preservationists Association of Pittsburgh
PO Box 2669
Pittsburgh, PA 15230-2669
holland6@aol.com

C: Young Preservationists Board of Directors
Arthur Ziegler, President, Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation
Court Gould, President, Sustainable Pittsburgh
Anne P. Canby, President, Surface Transportation Policy Project
Janet Milkman, Interim President & Executive Director, 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania