



LVPC Gets \$1 million for Route 22 Masterplan

Nearly 110,000 vehicles travel Route 22 each day, but the roadway now heading into its 70th year will need major work in the coming years to remain the Lehigh Valley's economic lifeblood.

With that in mind, Sen. Nick Miller has secured \$1 million in state Department of Transportation funding to enable the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission to direct a masterplan of how to maintain, enhance and potentially widen Route 22 over the next 25 years.

"Route 22 has long been a nuisance for community members and travelers," Miller said. "I've advocated for more funding to make the route wider to fix the near-constant congestion. It's a route that many, many people utilize, and we need to provide those on the road with a safer, better experience."

Miller said up to \$1 million can be used to update the 22/Tomorrow study done in 2001, identifying options that will allow Route 22 to handle the region's continued growth and how much those options would cost.

"Route 22 is the Lehigh Valley's most traveled highway," said Becky Bradley, Executive Director of the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission and Secretary of the Lehigh Valley Transportation Study, which serves as the Region's Metropolitan Planning Organization for all things transportation-related. "It's our Main Street. The last time Route 22 was studied was 20 years ago and with our growth, more must be done. We now will be able to prioritize and invest in improvements making Route 22 better for everyone."

Route 22 at the Lehigh River Bridge has nearly 110,000 vehicles per day, said Bradley. The Long-Range Transportation Plan, adopted by the Lehigh Valley Transportation Study November 15 and now under review by the federal highway Administration and Federal Transit Authority, includes hundreds of millions of dollars to be used for Route 22 maintenance and modernization projects. However, fully addressing the road's many short-comings – including considering widening the road to six lanes in its busiest segments – has been projected to cost \$2 billion. The updated strategy to be funded by the \$1 million would help define a clear path forward.

It comes at a time when the Lehigh Valley is projected to grow by nearly another 100,000 residents by 2050, and its place in the global e-commerce economy continues to expand with the building of more than 30 million square feet of new warehouse and logistics space over the past eight years.

"With the predicted growth in freight traffic from the FedEx facility and the Lehigh Valley International Airport on Airport Road, this study is urgent," added Miller. "It is anticipated that this will cause even more congestion on State Route 22. The continued growth of warehouses and facilities in our area is bringing jobs and economic development, but residents need to be able to get to their jobs and homes safely, without sitting in traffic day in and day out. We want to continue to grow our region, but not at the expense of our local community members. It is critical that we invest in our infrastructure in the Lehigh Valley before it becomes too dire."

