



## **Pennsylvania Turnpike Commits to Development of State Route 130 Interchange** *State and local officials join at future connector site to discuss project benefits.*

**PENN TOWNSHIP, WESTMORELAND COUNTY, PA (OCT. 28, 2021)** – State Senate Majority Leader Kim Ward (R-Westmoreland) today joined leaders from the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission (PTC) and local officials to announce that a planned, \$30-million interchange to link the Turnpike and State Route 130 in Penn Township can be advanced now that the PTC has largely been released from a 2007 state mandate to provide \$450 million annually to PennDOT to help fund Commonwealth transit operations.

“This interchange is a priority project for me as it is critical to the community I serve and the overall economic success of our region,” said Senate Majority Leader Kim Ward. “The project started when I was Chair of the Senate Transportation Committee, and I am thrilled that the PA Turnpike recognizes its importance and is here to continue moving it forward. This new connection has long been advocated because of the benefits of improved safety and mobility for passenger and commercial traffic in the corridor. I am excited to take this step forward today in making this project a reality.”

The State Route 130 Interchange and similar PA Turnpike improvement projects are now feasible because the PTC made its final \$450 million payment to PennDOT this past July.

“With these payments now in our rearview mirror, we can finally begin to ramp up efforts to rebuild and add capacity to our 564-mile roadway network,” said Turnpike Commission CEO Mark Compton. “We are now free to plan critical roadway enhancements like new connections to improve access for motorists and deliver economic opportunities to neighboring communities. Our commission was created by the state legislature in the 1930s to serve as an economic driver, and it’s what we do best.”

Compton added that, besides several new interchange projects, the commission can get back on track with its investment to rebuild and widen sections of its roadway — some of which are more than 81 years old.

“Other projects returning to PTC plans include various tunnel improvements and replacement of major bridges including the 70-year-old Beaver River Bridge in North Sewickley Township,” Compton explained.

The new Route 130 Interchange — a project that has won the backing of state, county, and local officials — will provide those residing in Pittsburgh’s eastern suburbs better access to neighboring counties and employment centers and encourage economic development in Westmoreland County.

“Planning for the Route 130 Interchange is well underway, but its completion does depend on the conversion of our toll-collection system to Open-Road Tolling, or ORT,” said PA Turnpike Chief Engineer Brad Heigel. “ORT involves moving tolling points away from interchanges — where they’re now located — to fixed sites along our mainline roadway between entry and exit points. For the western sections of our system, we plan to convert to ORT in 2026.”

Heigel explained that building new Turnpike interchanges is only feasible in an ORT environment due to significantly lower costs to construct tolling points above travel lanes compared to interchanges.

“Last year’s All-Electronic Tolling conversion gives us the ability to scan E-ZPass transponders and capture license-plate images at highway speeds,” Heigel said. “Now, we can collect tolls on the mainline between interchanges, and build interchanges with a smaller footprint and lower costs of the traditional design required to funnel on and off traffic through a toll plaza.”

Heigel said the cost savings to the PTC is significant — in the tens of millions of dollars compared to the old way of building interchanges.

Officials from Penn Township and nearby communities have consistently backed the construction of a new Turnpike interchange at this location, with support reaching a crescendo in the last few years.

“Although the Pennsylvania Turnpike passes through Penn Township, we don’t have an access point nearby. The Route 130 Interchange would make it easier to get onto I-76 while easing congestion on routes now used to access the Turnpike,” said Penn Township Commissioner Jeff Shula. “Mobility improvements like this are also a critical component of the township’s comprehensive plan which is aimed at boosting the economic viability of our municipality for residents and businesses alike. We cannot grow unless we can quickly and efficiently move goods to market and employees to work.”

The PTC’s obligation to provide the Commonwealth with supplemental transportation funding was a result of PA Act 44 of 2007. Under Act 89 of 2013, the PTC’s payment to the Commonwealth drops from \$450 million annually to \$50 million at the end of the current fiscal year; at that time, \$450 million for transit will come from the state’s General Fund. Lawmakers will have to address this shift in the next state budget.

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