

Planning Developments

◆ Planning Developments is published quarterly by the Mifflin County Planning and Development ◆

20 North Wayne Street ◆ Lewistown, PA 17044

No. 61

June 2014

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Kay Hamilton receiving the Planning Excellence Award. See story on page 2.



Deputy Secretary of Planning for the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, James Ritzman.

Upcoming Events

- ◆ Subdivision Review Meetings—June 19, July 17, August 21
- ◆ Planning Commission Meetings—June 26, July 24, August 28

Planning Commission Holds Annual Dinner

The Mifflin County Planning Commission held its annual dinner meeting on April 3, with approximately 85 people in attendance. Attendees included Mifflin County Commissioners, municipal officials, local planning commission members, State Representatives, and individuals from local businesses, organizations and various engineering firms.

The featured speaker for the evening was Deputy Secretary of Planning for the PA Department of Transportation, James Ritzman. Mr. Ritzman, since January 2007, has directed the activities associated with the Center for Program Development and Management, the Bureau of Municipal Services, and the Bureau of Planning and Research.

In his role, he is responsible for overseeing Pennsylvania's planning and programming functions, such as PennDOT's long range plan / comprehensive freight movement plan, Twelve Year Program development, and the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) which includes managing approximately 1.6 billion federal dollars each year.

Prior to his present assignment, James served as the Director of the Centers for Program Development and Management, the Chief Design Service Engineer in the Bureau of Design, the Construction Project Manager for the I-99/US 220 Corridor in Centre County, Special Assistant to the Deputy Secretary for Highway Administration, as well as several other assignments in his 28 years

with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation.

Mr. Ritzman's presentation focused on the new transportation bill and how it could affect Mifflin County in the future.

The transportation funding bill known as Act 89 will provide \$2.3 to \$2.4 billion in new transportation funding. In terms of local impact, he cited the Potters Gap project that will improve access to Centre and Mifflin County and the estimated \$34 million coming to the eight County SEDA-COG regions that includes Mifflin County. He also spoke of the new contracting efforts called "bridge bundling" that will bid out bridges in three counties at the same time. Other features of the act include a multi-modal fund for smaller local projects, such as the optional \$5 registration fee that counties can pass to improve their local bridge program. Mr. Ritzman ended his presentation by talking about new transportation technologies including driverless cars and vehicles communicating with each other.

Prior to Mr. Ritzman's presentation, Mr. William Gomes, director, presented the 2013 annual report. The annual report focused on the updates to the comprehensive plan, the hazard mitigation plan and the municipal waste management plan. The report also featured the project status of the Monument Square project and highlighted ongoing CDBG projects.

The evenings' ending highlight was the presentation of the Planning Award of Excellence pre-

County Plan Update Emphasizes Economic Development, Housing, and Transportation

After two years of review and development, Mifflin County recently completed an updated comprehensive plan. The Mifflin County Commissioners adopted the Plan on April 24, 2014. The past Plan was adopted in 2000. The Comprehensive Plan examines population trends and long term needs for housing, transportation, community facilities, economic development and natural resource protection and recommends changes or continued efforts in county policy and regulations. The Plan update has been funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, the County's Community Development Block Grant and Community Services Block Grant programs, Mifflin County Industrial Development Corporation, Lewistown Hospital, the Municipal Authority of the Borough of Lewistown, Derry Township and local funds.

The Mifflin County Planning and Development Department and its consultant team found the following in its research:

- ◆ The population growth in Mifflin County continues to be slower than surrounding counties and includes declines in the number of younger residents and increases in all age groups 45 and older.
- ◆ Manufacturing employed the most resident workers in the County in 2010, followed by education, health care and social services and retail trade. Manufacturing, agriculture/forestry, finance/insurance, administration (not public), accommodation and food services, and "other services" were the industries with stronger County employment trends than the state from 2006-2010. Increasing employment opportunities and economic development are top priorities among residents.
- ◆ There are housing shortages for segments of the resident population including middle income professionals, low income households (under \$35,000) and persons with accessibility needs such as the elderly or those with special needs.
- ◆ There are substandard roadway conditions along US 522 North and US 22 West/522 South as well as intersection deficiencies in the county such as Three Cent Lane at PA 655 and Mill Street at Electric Avenue.

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Annual Meeting *(continued from front page)*

sented to Kay Hamilton, president and CEO of Geisinger-Lewistown Hospital. Kay has worked for more than 40 years in the health care field, including work in the United States Air Force. She has worked at the Geisinger-Lewistown Hospital since 2001, working her way from Clinical Development Specialist, to Vice President of Nursing, to Senior Vice President of Patient Care Services to her current position of president and CEO. Kay has been active in the community through her involvement in the Mifflin-Juniata Career and Technology Center LPN Advisory Board, the Penn State Learning Center Advisory Board, the Community College Initiative Leadership Team, the Mifflin-Juniata Community Health Center Board

and the Mifflin County Industrial Development Corporation Board of Directors. In addition, she has supported the long term planning efforts in the county, which included the comprehensive plan, parks and recreation council, and the proposed dog park at Kish Park. Among the other reasons for this choice is her promotion of job training opportunities and the creation of good paying health care jobs as well as her efforts to re-open the School of Nursing at Lewistown Hospital in 2005.

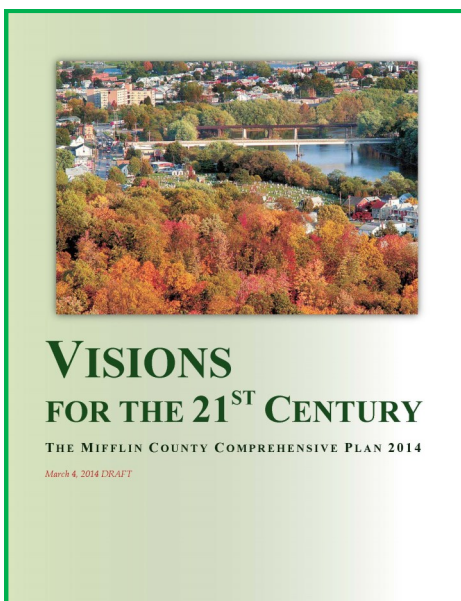


County Plan Update (continued from page 2)

Several key recommendations in the Plan are to:

- Coordinate among economic development organizations to prepare and market new business and industry sites and reestablish a collaborative economic development partnership in the County.
- Continue housing rehabilitation and accessibility efforts and encourage affordable housing options for seniors and housing choices for the general population.
- Support better connectivity to Centre County, and seek funds to improve bridges, rail crossings, interchanges and access roads to improve public safety.
- Strengthen the County Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance and assist municipalities in updating their subdivision and zoning ordinances.
- Consolidate community facilities and services where appropriate.
- Protect natural resources and expand community recreational opportunities.

The Plan now becomes the new reference for future updates to County development regulations, grant applications, municipal assistance, and other Planning and Development Department projects. Information on the Plan's preparation and the Plan update can be found at the project website <http://mifflincompplan.com/>, as well as at a link at the County web page.



Flood Insurance Increase in the Works since 2012

Dan Fitzpatrick, state National Flood Insurance Program Coordinator, gave a presentation at the March 27, 2014, Mifflin County Planning Commission Meeting about the changes that could be affecting 47 percent of Pennsylvania residents.

Homeowners have already started to notice an increase to their flood insurances due to a Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2012 (Biggert-Waters Act). However, according to Mr. Fitzpatrick, new acts should help to stop the high increase.

The effects of the major hurricanes recently like Katrina and Sandy provoked the Act of 2012 so that rates would quickly rise to accurately reflect the risk of those living in the flood plain areas. Some law makers seemed to believe it would focus on certain portions of the housing market, but it is pervasive more on average home owners than they thought. Due to the widespread complaints on the adverse effects it was having, the Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act 306-91 was signed into law on March 21, 2014.

"This is still really new," he said. "Our office has not had a chance to look this over to be able to understand it fully, but we do know it is designed to protect homeowners from unreasonable and unrealistic premium increases, which is what some are seeing now."

This most recent act provided greater consumer affordability and predictability in five areas. The first thing it does is to permanently remove the home sales or new policy rate increase trigger for the primary residence. It treats the person buying the home the same as the person selling it, and restores real estate markets in communities across the county. The second thing is it reinstates grandfathered rates by decoupling rate increases with the Federal Emergency Management Agency re-mapping. Another way this act helps is to provide a refund for the people who purchased a subsidized home without the full transparency from FEMA. The fourth thing the act provides home improvement protection by increasing the threshold that triggers a loss of grandfathered status. The proposal would raise it to 50 percent from the existing 30 percent. The final thing the act provides is it also includes other affordability measures which include high deducti-

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Mifflin County CDBG Funded Projects Progress

Mifflin County, Derry Township and Brown Township’s projects funded by the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (CDBG-R), and Competitive Grant programs continue to progress towards completion. The funded projects benefit low and moderate income citizens and neighborhoods. The following 2013 projects are either continuations of previously funded projects or new projects in Mifflin County, Derry Township and Brown Township’s CDBG funds.

At the publication time of this newsletter, Mifflin County and Derry Township are waiting for the executed contracts to be sent by DCED (Department of Community and Economic Development). Funds are anticipated to be available within the next several months. Surveys or projects design, bidding can take place when funds are available.

Mifflin County CDBG Projects Update

The Juniata Terrace sewer relining project is in the design process and will be ready to bid when the 2013 funds are available.

Final payments are being made to Armagh Township (Brown’s Addition & Laurel Avenue) Project. Eastern Industries, Inc. completed the work last fall. Armagh Township is contributing to this project.



Before



After

Derry Township CDBG Projects Update

One of the 2013 funded projects is the dog park at Kish Park. CDBG funds will be utilized to remove architectural barriers from the entrance and restrooms. All areas will meet ADA guidelines.

Derry Township is still awaiting notification of a competitive grant submitted earlier in 2014 for the extension of the waterline along the 522 corridor from Crossover Drive to the Decatur Township line. The Municipal Authority of the Borough of Lewistown (MABL) would install the line and be responsible for maintenance.

Brown Township CDBG Projects Update

A modification was submitted to DCED in April of 2014 to change the scope of the 2012 funds from the Main Street Streetscape Project to the removal of architectural barriers project at the Reedsville playground and Bender Park

2014 CDBG Funding

The 2014 funding cycle will soon be starting. The application dates for submission will be September or October 2014. Funding agencies and municipalities will be notified what their allocation amounts will be and more specific dates for submission. Funding amount should be near the 2013 levels.

Juniata Terrace Fire

At the end of March, the Juniata Terrace Borough and its residents suffered through a devastating fire that severely damaged and affected a number of homes in the 300 block of Terrace Boulevard. The department staff has met with the borough and a representative of the residents along with DCED staff to determine what funding could be utilized in the short and long term revitalization of the Borough. Potentially CDBG funds may be used for recovery efforts.



HOME Program

The 2010 HOME program is nearing the end of its available funds. All funds need to be expended by September 2014. We have assisted 21 local homeowners with substantial repairs to their homes. We will be applying for addition HOME funds in 2014. The County is considering partnering with the Borough of Lewistown for the preparation of another HOME application to DCED in June or July 2014. This will be for \$500,000 to continue the County’s single-family housing rehabilitation program.

Potters Mills Gap Transportation Project

Source: PennDOT Website and presentation material

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), District 2-0, in coordination with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), is pursuing the Potters Mills Gap (PMG) Transportation Project to evaluate improvements to a 3.75-mile long section of Route 322 in Potter Township, Center County, Pennsylvania. The PMG Transportation Project falls within an area locally known as “Potters Mill Gap” in the Tussey Ridge formation. “The Gap” is formed by Triester and Kohler Mountains. Potter Run flows north through the narrow gap into Penns Valley and Bald Eagle and Rothrock State Forest are on either side of Route 322 within the project area. The project area includes the small village of Potters Mills, PA and extends from just west of the Route 322 / Route 144 intersection at Potters Mills to the top of Seven Mountains, near the Centre County / Mifflin County line along Route 322. Within the project area, Route 322 is classified as a rural, principal arterial, which conveys traffic through the region.

The purpose of the Potters Mills Gap Project is to improve Route 322 through the project area and meet traffic and local needs, while providing a transportation facility that improves safety, reduces congestion, enhances mobili-



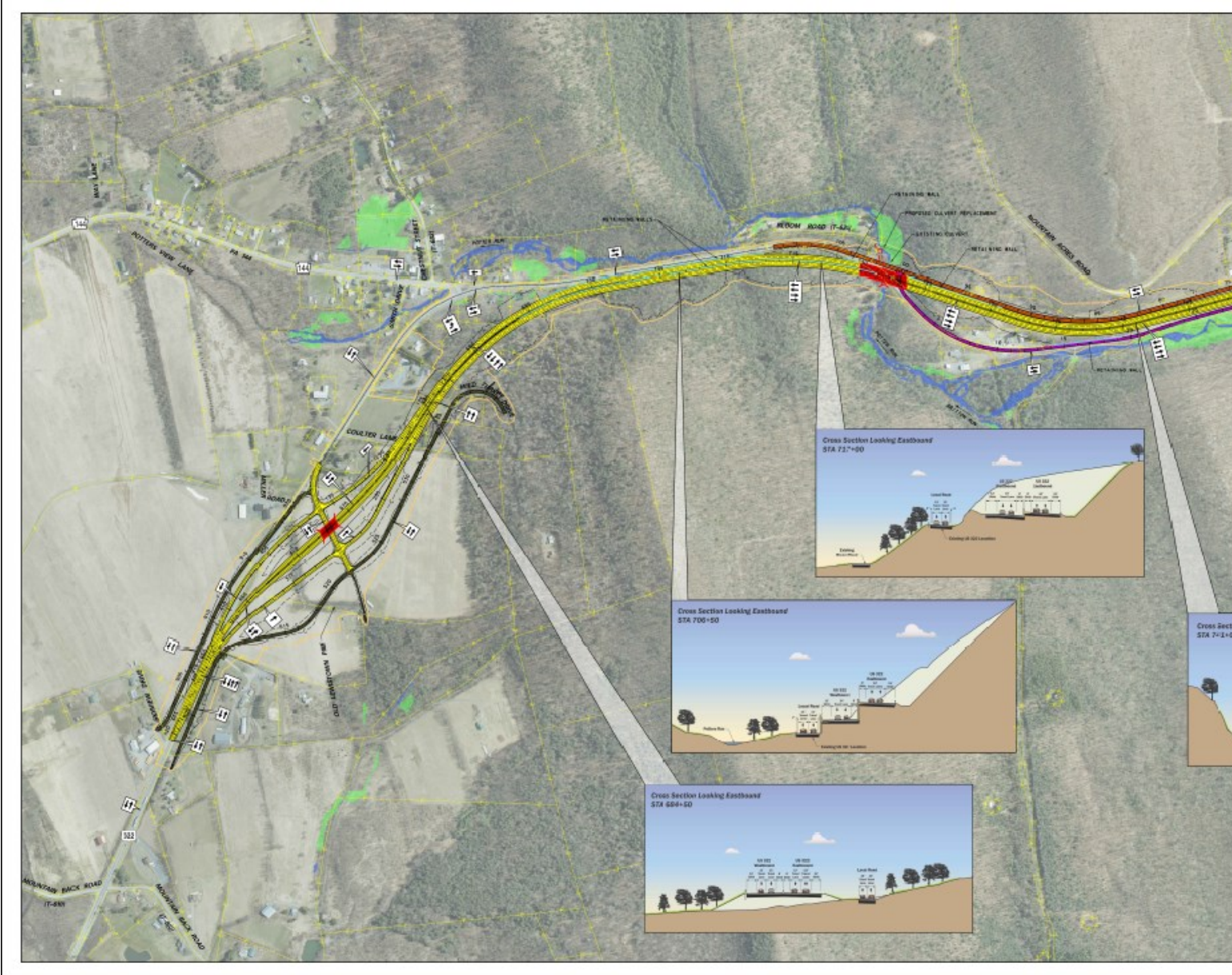
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Potter Mills Gap (continued from page 5)

ty and alleviates access concerns. This two-lane section of Route 322 is known for motorist delays due to truck traffic negotiating steep grades and the absence of alternate routes during incident-related road closures. The Route 322 / Route 144 intersection also exhibits a crash history in excess of the statewide average, despite a number of safety improvements previously undertaken by PennDOT to improve safety and traffic flow. The improvements to date include the addition of signing, turning lanes, flattened slopes and other targeted improvements to address localized safety and mobility.

The PMG project provides a full interchange at the western project limit near Potters Mills west of the Route 322 / Route 144 intersection. It also provided full interchange at the eastern project limit at Sand Mountain Road. The full interchanges at both the eastern and western termini allow the connector road to be designed using local road standards, reducing the footprint of the connector road, minimizing impacts to sensitive resources through the gap area, and reducing the number of residential acquisitions for the project.

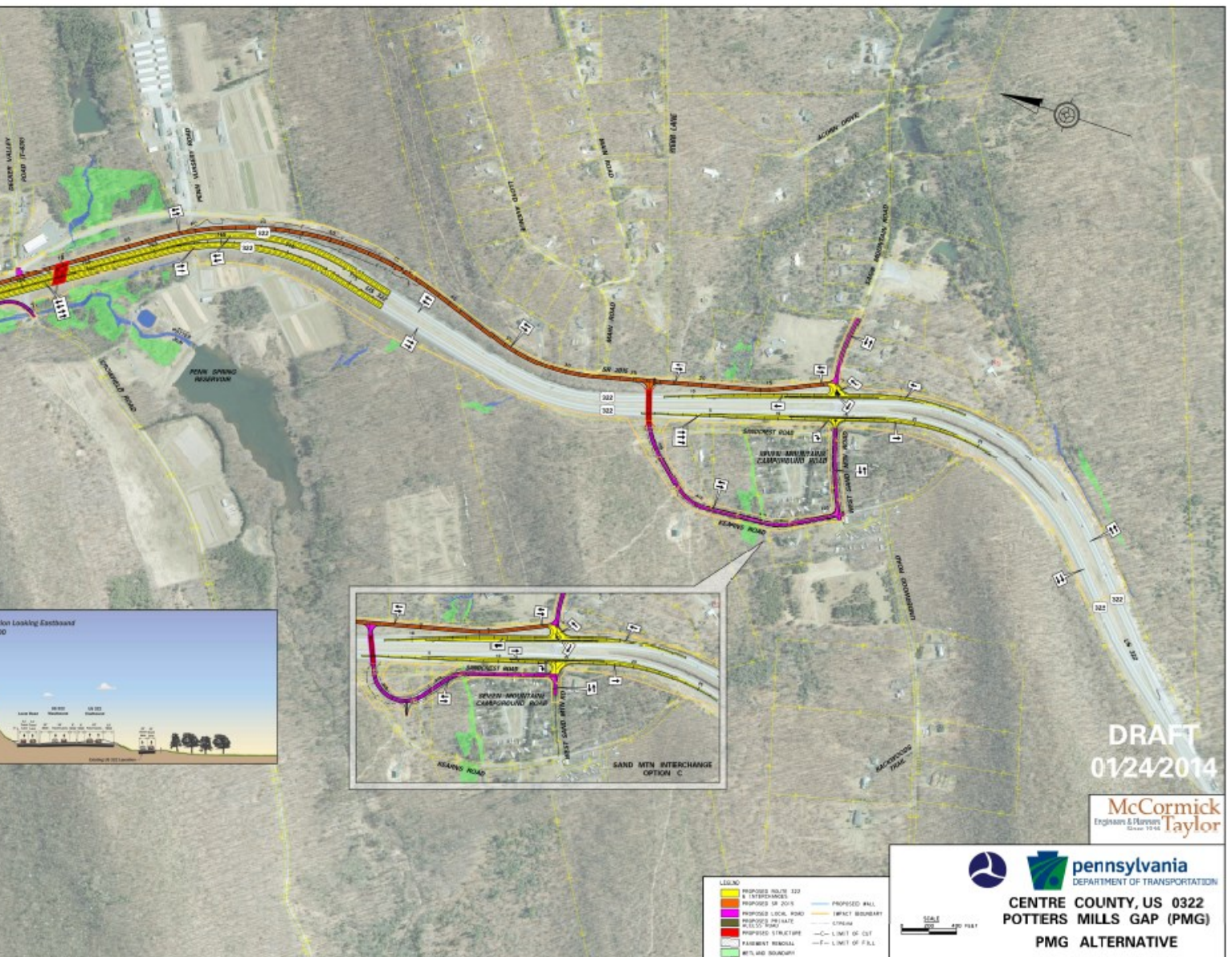
As part of the PMG, the Route 322 four-lane limited access facility is extended from its current end at Decker Valley Road to the new interchange area west of the Route 322 / Route 144 intersection. The new four-lane section is partially off-alignment, but was designed to stay as close to the existing Route 322 as possible to minimize impacts. A four-lane roadway through this area provides the needed truck passing lanes so smaller passenger vehicles can safely pass slower moving vehicles. The western end of the four-lane roadway



would be at a point in the Route 322 alignment where the grade and horizontal geometry is such that all vehicles (trucks and passenger cars alike) should be able to travel at the same speed. The proposed four-lane Route 322 extension also eliminates the at-grade intersection of Decker Valley Road with the four-lane section of Route 322. Decker Valley Road would be connected to the new two lane local road that is to be provided between Potters Mills (Route 144) and Sand Mountain Road. At Sand Mountain Road, a full interchange will be provided, eliminating the at-grade intersection of Sand Mountain Road with the four-lane section of Route 322.

This is a three phase project with phase 1 starting this year. Phase one is the construction of an overhead structure for local traffic access. The estimated cost is \$3,300,000 . The second phase which is anticipated for late 2015, consist of construction of the interchange at Sand Mountain Road and the reconstruction of SR 2015. The estimated cost for phase 2 is \$5,500,000. Constructing the mainline of US 322 including possibly 4 structures and retaining walls is phase 3. Phase 3 is anticipated to start in late 2016 and estimated to cost \$106,700,000.

A copy draft environmental assessment document for the project is available at the Mifflin County Planning and Development office.



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Flood Insurance *(continued from page 3)*

ble options and more.

The removal of this provision ensures that policy holders are not penalized who built to code and built to standards of existing flood insurance rate maps. Creating new maps is a priority of FEMA, but FEMA does not currently have the funding,

All of this could change again as the Affordability Act is only delaying the Reform Act of 2012. Mr. Fitzpatrick said the changes could come after an affordability study is done as part of the Reform Act of 2012.

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Developing a Better Community

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