



US 219 PAVING THE WAY

Volume 1

June 2001

PENNDOT Begins Studies of U.S. 219

Pennsylvania's Department of Transportation (PENNDOT) District 9-0 has retained Greenhorne & O'Mara, Inc. (G&O) to prepare preliminary engineering and environmental studies for the 15.2 mile section of U.S. 219 between the northern section of the Meyersdale Bypass and the existing four lane section of U.S. 219 near Somerset Borough (see map below).

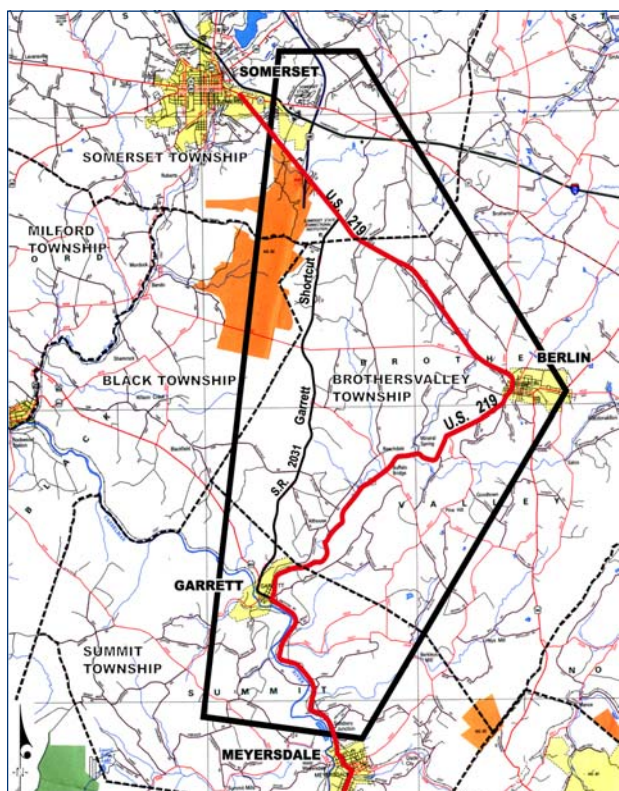
Improvements to U.S. 219 are needed due to deficient levels of service, high accident rates, increased travel times and delays, an inefficient link for motorists traveling between I-68 in Maryland and the PA Turnpike, limited economic

development for local areas, and insufficient access to local communities.

U.S. 219 is a major north-south transportation corridor providing access from Canada, through New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and West Virginia. It has been designated as a principal arterial on the National Highway System (NHS). The portion located in Pennsylvania is on the Pennsylvania Priority Commercial Network (PCN). U.S. 219 is also part of a larger transportation corridor, called "Continental 1," which extends from Florida to Canada and is being promoted as a multimodal international trade corridor.

PENNDOT understands that many residents in the area are frustrated at the length of time the planning process has taken to date and will take before actual construction can begin. But, as members of the project team explain, it is important that a complete inventory of environmental resources be identified prior to the development of alternatives. Once a variety of potential alternatives has been developed, an analysis of the environmental impacts associated with the alternatives will be prepared. During this phase, the public and environmental agencies will be requested to provide input on the alternatives and environmental impacts. This input is critical to the process of selecting the best alternatives to carry through to the detailed study phases.

We appreciate your eagerness, and we need your input to further develop reasonable alternatives with the least environmental impacts.



The U.S. 219 Study Area

The study area is in the southern portion of Somerset County and encompasses the following areas:

- Boroughs**
- Somerset
 - Berlin
 - Garrett
 - Meyersdale

- Townships**
- Somerset
 - Brothersvalley
 - Summit

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What are They Doing?

Many of you have received a letter from Keller Engineers, on behalf of PENNDOT, regarding their intent to enter your property. Over the next year, you will observe people digging in the fields, studying plants and animals, and placing orange flags around wetlands. You may also notice people taking photographs of your homes and asking questions concerning farms, mining, and your community.

These people are environmental scientists from Greenhorne & O'Mara, Inc. and their subconsultants who are conducting the field investigations and other tasks to evaluate the natural and man-made environment within the study area. Resources being studied include:

- Archeological Resources
- Geological Features (including surface and deep mines)
- Wildlife Habitat
- Threatened and Endangered Species
- Wetlands
- Water Quality
- Historic Structures
- Farmlands
- Hazardous Waste
- Socioeconomics



PENNDOT and G&O would like to extend their sincere thanks in advance to the communities and the citizens of Somerset County for their cooperation and assistance with our studies for this project.

Public Involvement Opportunities

During the design phase of the project, there will be opportunities for you to become involved and to keep abreast of the progress of the U.S. 219 project. Public meetings are a great way to stay informed. Numerous meetings will be held throughout the length of the project to involve you in the process. The first of these meetings was held on April 30, 2001, at the Berlin-Brothersvalley School in Berlin, Pennsylvania. Meetings are also being held on a regular basis with County Commissioners, other public officials, and the Somerset County Chamber of Commerce. The next public meeting will be conducted in the fall to present preliminary alternatives for your input.

PENNDOT will also be publishing project newsletters, similar to this one, on a periodic basis to keep you informed of the project status. Please visit our website (www.us219.com) to get the latest information on the project.

U.S. 219 - A 5th Grade View Berlin-Brothersvalley Middle School

U.S. 219

by Erin Landis
&
Catelyn Hillegass

This year PENNDOT got Berlin's 5th grade included in U.S. 219. They told us what they wanted to do and asked what we thought of the project. They invited us to help them with their open house by helping with refreshments and signing in. Emily Carver, Catelyn Hillegass, Rachael Leister, Courtney Shroyer, Seth Snyder, Emily Spear, and Nick Svetahor were there to help. We think it was nice of them to get us involved and we think 219 sounds great! If you would like to find out more check out their website at www.US219.com



Findings of U.S. 219 Public Meeting

A Public Meeting addressing improvements to U.S. 219 was held on April 30th at the Berlin-Brothersvalley School. At the meeting, residents were able to review mapping and information on the project, and to ask questions or present concerns to the project team. A questionnaire was provided that allowed residents to voice their opinion on any aspect of the project. After reviewing the questionnaires and talking to individuals, it became obvious that several issues are foremost on residents' minds.

- The most pressing issue expressed was the location of the proposed improvements and concerns over the possible loss of private property. Tied closely to this was the concern about how property ownership along the new road will be affected, including access to businesses that are dependent on the current location of U.S. 219.
- Also mentioned was the fact that this project has been studied and discussed for many years, and people are wondering if it will actually happen. Citizens want assurances that the project will move forward on a reasonable schedule and that it will be constructed in a timely manner.
- When asked to provide specific information about environmental concerns in the area, people mentioned farmland, wetlands, and endangered species/wildlife. When asked about groups who would be impacted by the new road, sportsmen were the most mentioned, followed by environmentalists.
- People are very interested in seeing alternatives at future meetings.

All issues and concerns raised at the public meeting are being evaluated and will be considered during the highway development process. As always, your involvement in this process is welcome and is, in fact, essential. If you have any concerns, questions, or ideas regarding this project, please contact Joan Glynn, Public Involvement Coordinator at (717) 691-3355 or at jglynn@US219.com or Dave Sherman at (814) 696-7172.

We Need Your Help!

PENNDOT is seeking to identify all archaeology sites, in addition to all coal mines, oil/gas wells, and quarries in the U.S. 219 Improvements Project study area. If you have any knowledge of archaeology sites, strip mines, deep mines, mine openings, or oil/gas wells on your property or on nearby properties, please complete the form below and send it to:

Mr. Joel Smith, Greenhorne & O'Mara, Inc.
5000 Ritter Road, Suite 102, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055
Fax: (717) 691-3366

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Best time to call: _____ a.m. _____ p.m. (circle one)

I have information on (please check all that apply):

_____ Deep mines	_____ Oil/gas wells
_____ Strip mines	_____ On my property
_____ Mine openings	_____ On nearby properties
_____ Archaeology sites	

Thank you for your assistance!

Mailing List Coupon

Newsletters will be published on a regular basis throughout the project. If you received this newsletter through the mail, you are already included on our mailing list. If you would like to be included on our mailing list and are not already on it, or if you would like to be removed from the list, please mail the form below to the Public Involvement Coordinator at G&O, Inc.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Mail to: **Joan Glynn**
Public Involvement Coordinator
Greenhorne & O'Mara, Inc.
5000 Ritter Road, Suite 102
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055
Fax: (717) 691-3366

- Please add me to your mailing list.
- Please remove me from your mailing list.

Study Timeline

Public Meeting to Introduce the Project	April 30, 2001
Preliminary Alternatives Analysis	Fall 2001
Public Meeting to Present Preliminary Alternatives	Fall 2001
Detailed Alternatives Analysis	Spring/Summer 2002
Public Meeting to Present Detailed Alternatives Analysis	Late Summer/Fall 2002
Draft Environmental Impact Statement	Winter 2002/2003
Public Meeting on Draft Environmental Impact Statement	Winter 2002/2003
Final Environmental Impact Statement	Spring 2003
Pre-Final Design	Fall 2003

Progress to Date

Preliminary studies are well underway. Existing environmental features have been mapped through the use of geographic information systems (GIS). This mapping provides an excellent base map of the natural and cultural resources within the study area. The mapping is nearly complete, preliminary field verification has been conducted, and preliminary alternatives are being developed. The alternatives include: No Build (No New Construction); TSM - Transportation System Management (minor upgrades/improvements); and three alternatives on new locations. The study alternatives will be overlaid on the environmental base mapping. This will provide an excellent picture of the environmental resources and how each alternative will impact them. Alternatives will be revised during the study process in order to avoid or minimize environmental impacts.



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