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Newsletter of the Township Engineers Association

January 2022

Latest News

Data Shows Pennsylvania Roundabouts Reduce Fatalities, Injuries, and Crashes

The state Department of Transportation (PennDOT) has announced that a recent study shows that fatalities, injuries, and crashes have all decreased at 26 roundabouts in 23 locations since they were built.

PennDOT reviewed data for 26 roundabouts on state routes at intersections that were previously stop sign- or signal-controlled. These roundabouts were selected because they had at least three years of crash data available before and after they were built.

Department data based on police-submitted crash reports from 2000 through 2020 shows that fatalities at these locations decreased by 100% and the total number of crashes decreased by 22%. Additionally:

- Suspected serious injuries were reduced by 81%;
- Suspected minor injuries were reduced by 36%;
- Possible/unknown severity injuries were reduced by 76%; and
- Property damage-only crashes increased by 13%.

Roundabouts offer improved safety over other at-grade intersection forms primarily because they have fewer conflict points, slower speeds, and easier decision making. Roundabouts are geometrically designed to reduce vehicle speeds to generally 25 mph or less, and all turns are right turns. This significantly reduces the severity of crashes over those at traditional intersections. Crashes that do occur are typically low-speed, sideswipe crashes, rather than high-speed T-bone collisions that can occur at traditional intersections, especially with left turns.

Roundabouts also improve pedestrian safety due to the slow speeds and a median refuge area.

This allows for two simple crossings of one-way traffic. Although roundabouts are safer and typically more efficient than traditional signalized intersections, they may not always be the best option due to topography or other issues, such as property impacts, capacity, and proximity to other intersections.

To educate Pennsylvanians on how to navigate a roundabout, the department created a video on how to use both single and multi-lane roundabouts in a vehicle, on a bicycle, or on foot. The video can be accessed by visiting PennDOT's [roundabout](#) page or by visiting the department's [YouTube](#) channel.

Nominate a Project for the Road and Bridge Safety Improvement Contest

Do you have a municipal client that completed a road or bridge project in 2021 that has improved safety for motorists and/or other road users? Encourage them to enter the Road and Bridge Safety Improvement Awards, cosponsored by PSATS, PennDOT, and the Pa. Highway Information Association.

Applications are due by **March 4, 2022**. Complete details, guidelines, and an entry form are available [here](#).

U.S. Treasury Releases New Portal and User's Guide for ARP Reports

Engineers are encouraged to remind their municipal clients to look for an email from the U.S. Treasury that describes how to access the Treasury Portal through Login.gov, which townships with populations of less than 50,000, known as "non-entitlement units" (NEUs), must use to file required reports for their American Rescue Plan funds. The first report is due April 30, 2022. To view the new user's guide for NEUs, which describes how they need to set up accounts, assign reporting roles, and provide required documentation on the use of the ARP funds, [click here](#).

Grants Available for Environmental Street Projects

The Chesapeake Bay Green Streets, Green Jobs, Green Towns (G3) Grant Program, funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Region 3, and the Chesapeake Bay Trust, supports design projects, financing strategies, and/or implementation of green street projects. The grant program helps communities develop and implement plans that reduce stormwater runoff, increase the number and acreage of green spaces in urban areas, improve the health of local streams and the Chesapeake Bay, and enhance quality of life and community livability.

Applications are due by 4 p.m. March 3, 2022. Additional information can be found [HERE](#). This program also supports white papers on innovative ideas for green infrastructure and charrettes to plan and vision a green street project with developers, citizens, planners, and other key stakeholders. Grant funding can be applied anywhere in the Chesapeake Bay watershed portion of EPA Region 3 (excludes New York).

Small Businesses Benefit from Funding Program

DEP's Small Business Advantage Grant provides 50% reimbursement matching grants, up to \$5,000, to Pennsylvania-based small businesses to adopt processes or acquire equipment that boost energy efficiency, pollution prevention, and natural resource protection. Grants may be used for natural resource or energy conservation, opportunities to reduce environmental contamination from air emissions and water effluents, or opportunities to develop and apply environmental improvement technologies and methods.

To be eligible, the applicant's business must be Pennsylvania-based, registered to do business in Pennsylvania, and a for-profit small business with 100 or fewer full-time-equivalent employees. The proposed energy efficiency and/or pollution prevention project must save the business at least \$500 annually and at least 25% in energy consumption or pollution-related expenses. Natural resource protection projects must quantify the reduction of nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment loadings reaching the receiving waterway.

All applications must be submitted through the state's [Electronic Single Application for Assistance website](#). Online application instructions are available on page 21 of the [application instructions](#).

Reminder: Register for the PSATS 2022 Conference

All member engineers should have received information about registering to attend PSATS' 2022 Annual Educational Conference & Exhibit Show, which will be held April 24-27, 2022, at the Hershey Lodge.

Registration for exhibit space and hotel room reservations can only be made online beginning at 9 a.m. January 11 at conference.psats.org. If you have questions, please call PSATS Exhibit Show Manager Donna Centofanti at (717) 763-0930, ext. 118. But hurry — exhibit show spaces often sell out by the end of January.

Reminder: Prepare Now for DCNR C2P2 Grant Program

The 2022 grant application period for the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' Community Conservation Partnerships Program (C2P2) will open January 18, 2022, and applications will be accepted until **4 p.m. April 6, 2022**.

All applications must be submitted through the [DCNR Grants Customer Service Portal](#). Although the application period is a month away, it's never too early to contact your [regional advisor](#) to discuss your project idea and ways to make it more competitive for state grants.

Legal Update

Property Owner Ordered to Rebuild Concrete Path and Stairs Demolished in Violation of Zoning Permit

In *Taiani v. Zoning Hearing Bd. of Borough of Wilkinsburg*, 1484 C.D. 2019, 2021 WL 5443664 (Pa.Cmwith. Nov. 22, 2021), the court affirmed an order compelling that a common sidewalk and stairs be rebuilt after the property owner disregarded the borough's zoning permit approving construction of a fence and retaining wall that required the common sidewalk and stairs to "remain as-is."

The zoning hearing board affirmed the notice of violation and found no basis to grant a variance or special exception. It also affirmed that the property owner was aware of the terms and conditions of the permit. The Commonwealth Court found, among other things, that any hardship that existed was created by the property owner and that the time for him to complain had passed. Instead, he should have addressed the issue in his permit application. It also rejected a litany of other issues raised by the property owner on appeal.

Legislative Report

The following is an updated summary of recently signed laws and relevant legislation affecting townships that is under consideration by the General Assembly. Please note that the status of these bills may have changed.

Acts

Act 96 of 2021 ([HB 2071](#))

This act creates a Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority to disburse state and federal funds for the expansion of broadband to unserved and underserved areas, coordinate broadband development, and produce a statewide broadband development plan. The authority is needed to access \$100 million in federal aid for broadband rollout. This act addresses a PSATS resolution.

Status: Signed December 22, 2021.

Effective date: December 22, 2021.

Act 97 of 2021 ([SB 208](#))

This act amends the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code to clarify that a municipality may not require a developer to post a bond of more than 110% of the costs of the improvements. It also clarifies that a municipality may retain 110% of the estimated cost of the remaining improvements.

Status: Signed December 22, 2021.

Effective date: February 20, 2022.

Legislation**Restrictions on utility services prohibited** ([SB 275/PN 1163](#) and [HB 1947/PN 2223](#))

This bill would prohibit municipalities from restricting access to any energy source and clarify that this bill does not affect municipal land use authority under the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code or a municipality's ability to take steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from municipal facilities and operations.

Status: SB 275 has passed the Senate and is before the House Local Government Committee.

HB 1947 is before the House Appropriations Committee.

Electronic transmission of land use documents ([SB 755/PN 943](#))

This bill would amend the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code to give municipalities and counties the option to transmit land use documents electronically that they are currently required to submit to another entity for review and comment, such as proposed zoning ordinance amendments and comprehensive plans.

Status: Has passed the Senate and is before the House Local Government Committee.

Regulation of fireworks ([SB 894/PN 1135](#))

This bill would prohibit the use of consumer fireworks between the hours of 11 p.m. and 10 a.m. except for July 2, 3, and 4 and December 31, when consumer fireworks could be used until 1 a.m. the following day. It would also increase fines for fireworks used in violation of state law from \$100 to up to \$1,000 for a first offense, up to \$2,500 for a second offense, and up to \$5,000 for a third or subsequent offense.

Status: Before the Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee.

Boundary changes ([HB 1877/PN 2309](#))

This bill would establish the Municipal Boundary Change Act to consolidate and standardize municipal code provisions that deal with boundary change but not mergers or consolidations and would allow municipalities to adjust a municipal boundary or settle a dispute over an unclear boundary by agreement.

Status: Has passed the House and is before the Senate Local Government Committee.

Regulation of fertilizer and professional applicators ([SB 251/PN 1183](#))

This bill would regulate the application of fertilizer and professional fertilizer applicators to reduce excess levels of nitrogen and phosphorus. Additionally, it would include a homeowner education program and require local governments that choose to have employees apply fertilizer to public property, including public parks, to obtain a fertilizer application license and employ at least one certified public applicator to manage the fertilizer applications and keep records of each application. Finally, it would clarify that local governments that use a licensed fertilizer application business would not need to follow these provisions.

Status: Has passed the Senate and is before the House.

Liability protection for recreation volunteers ([HB 1694/PN 2324](#))

This bill would amend the Recreational Use of Land and Water Act to provide protection from liability for volunteers and volunteer organizations that care for, preserve, or maintain land for recreational purposes, recreation land, and nonprofits.

Status: Has passed the House and is before the Senate Community, Economic, and Recreational Development Committee.

Upcoming Educational Opportunities *(many PDH eligible)*

Calling All Subject Matter Experts!

PSATS continues to host numerous in-person and virtual educational events targeted at both township engineers and municipal officials as detailed below. If you are interested in sharing your expertise for an in-person or virtual presentation on any topic of interest to our audience, please contact Education Director Scott Coburn at scoburn@psats.org.

In-Person Classes

[Duties Of A Zoning Hearing Board - 2/22/22 - Chester County](#)

[Duties Of A Zoning Hearing Board - 3/3/22 - Butler County](#)

[Duties Of A Zoning Hearing Board - 3/8/22 - Cumberland County](#)

From making decisions on contentious public issues to learning the ins and outs of the Municipalities Planning Code, being a member of a zoning hearing board can be a challenge. In these classes, Elam Herr, PSATS' former assistant executive director and current chair of the East Hempfield Township, Lancaster County, zoning hearing board, has a wealth of experience and will help you to better navigate this challenge. Topics to be covered include procedures for deciding variances and special exceptions, handling hearing-related questions, Ethics Act requirements, and much more. Attendees will also learn specific, practical tips that will leave them better prepared for their next meeting or hearing. While this course is geared more toward newer zoning hearing board members, those looking for a refresher on their obligations will also benefit.

[PSATS SEO Precertification Academy - 3/28-4/1, 2022](#)

The PSATS SEO Precertification Academy is designed to teach the basic skills a future sewage enforcement officer (SEO) needs to know to work for a local agency. If your firm is looking to develop new SEOs, they will need to take this course as a prerequisite to taking the state certification exam. Register them now as space is limited.

[2022 Engineers Spring Seminar - 4/25 & 4/26, 2022](#)

It is never too early to plan for the 2022 Engineers Spring Seminar, which will be held in-person the mornings of April 25 & 26, 2022, in conjunction with the PSATS Annual Conference in Hershey. Eligible for three PDHs per day. Click on the link above to register.

PowerPass-Eligible Webinars

[Webinar - Should We Have An Ordinance For That? - 1/12/22](#)

In this webinar, representatives from the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission will review key issues that are important to your township's comprehensive planning and implementation efforts. Using Susquehanna Township, Dauphin County, as an example, they will discuss such issues as infrastructure, land development, open space, housing/building stock, cultural resources, and transportation.

[Webinar - Stormwater Management: An Annoying Requirement, Simplified - 1/26/22](#)

This webinar will provide an overview of the challenges and best practices associated with managing a township's many stormwater-related responsibilities in a user-friendly and easy-to-understand way.

[Webinar - Where We Ride: Bicycle And Pedestrian Networks and Improvements - 2/23/22](#)

Do all streets and roads need to be "complete"? Not all do, but enough to create a network that allows bicyclists and pedestrians to travel to their regular destinations. Selecting township roads for the network and prioritizing locations for improvement are processes that must build on previous planning efforts and current usage, assess the level of improvement needed to make biking and walking feel comfortable, and consider facility maintenance responsibilities.

[Webinar - What Your Public Works Director Wants You to Know - 3/23/22](#)

Your township's public works staff have unique perspective, knowledge, history, and information that greatly benefit elected officials and senior employees. Confronted daily with the challenge of

solving problems with finite resources, they are your front line for issues that matter to your constituents. This webinar will help you understand township public works infrastructure, operations, and management so that you can better respond to residents and lead your community.

Virtual Classes

[2022 PSATS HR & Labor Management Institute - Virtual - 1/12/22](#)

As an employer, engineering firms also have a need for competent professionals handling their HR matters. Toward this end, PSATS developed the Human Resources & Labor Management Institute. This virtual full-day offering is a must-attend for anyone who has responsibility for HR and personnel management. Click the link above for full details and share this with your HR department staff.

[The Code Official's Guide To Zoning - Virtual - 1/18/22](#)

This 90-minute online course provides a comprehensive review of current zoning issues and problems as they relate to the Uniform Construction Code. Topics include an overview of the Municipalities Planning Code, zoning requirements and difficulties, responsibilities of building code officials to meet and manage zoning challenges, permit issuance and enforcement conflicts, violation letter requirements and templates, and legal issues in zoning.

[Duties Of A Zoning Hearing Board - 3/15/22 - Virtual](#)

See description above under In-Person Classes.



This monthly newsletter for members of the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Engineers focuses on news and matters of interest to municipal engineers and provides details on upcoming training opportunities. To access previous editions, log onto www.psats.org and look under the "Newsroom" tab. Email comments and suggestions to James Wheeler at jwheeler@psats.org.



Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors

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