

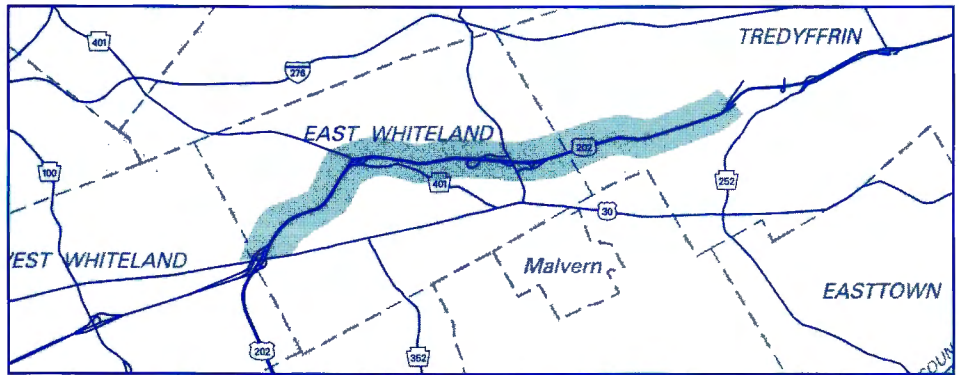
DVRPC NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF DELAWARE VALLEY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

PRELIMINARY ENGINEERING STUDY INITIATED FOR IMPROVEMENT TO US 202, SECTION 300 IN CHESTER COUNTY

DVRPC and PennDOT have set a timetable for improving US 202 between Swedesford Road and the US 30 Bypass in Exton, Chester County, known as Section 300. Advancing the project in a timely manner has resulted from a unique partnership between the Federal Highway Administration, PennDOT, Chester County and DVRPC — and a generous 10% monetary contribution from the county's business community, which will be used to hire a consultant to prepare a Categorical Exclusion Evaluation (CEE) environmental report.

The Chester County Commissioners felt it was imperative to accelerate the project, which is critical to maintaining mobility in Chester County. In December, 1995 the Exton Bypass was opened, introducing new traffic patterns



to the southern end of the corridor. Beginning in March, 1999, US 202, Section 400 will be undergoing widening to provide a minimum of three travel lanes in each direction from Swedesford Road north to South Gulph Road in King of Prussia. Completion is anticipated in 2002.

US 202, Section 300 improvement will eliminate an impending "hour-glass" condition in the region's freeway network. Widening within the grass median to provide a third travel lane in each direction is the main concept for the seven-mile project. The proposed widening will include some modification to interchanges and bridge clearances, noise wall construction and storm water management treatments. The total cost of the Section 300 project is estimated to be \$115 million and could be completed as early as 2004.

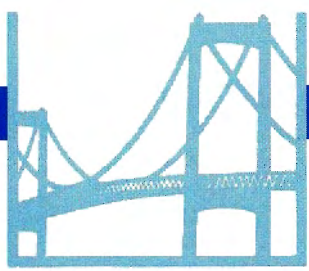
McCormick, Taylor & Associates,

Inc., a Philadelphia-based engineering and planning consulting firm, has been selected to conduct the environmental study. DVRPC was chosen by PennDOT to provide both project management and technical services for the environmental study. Administrative services, a first for DVRPC, will include providing overall project management for the environmental clearance. Technical services include preparation of the travel forecasts and a project level congestion management system analyses. PennDOT will provide overall direction for the study and engineering process to insure that federal requirements are met. Other major elements within the CEE include: public participation, municipal government coordination, preparation of a sedimentation and erosion control plan, and quantitative noise analyses.

Realizing the importance of stakeholder involvement, DVRPC held an

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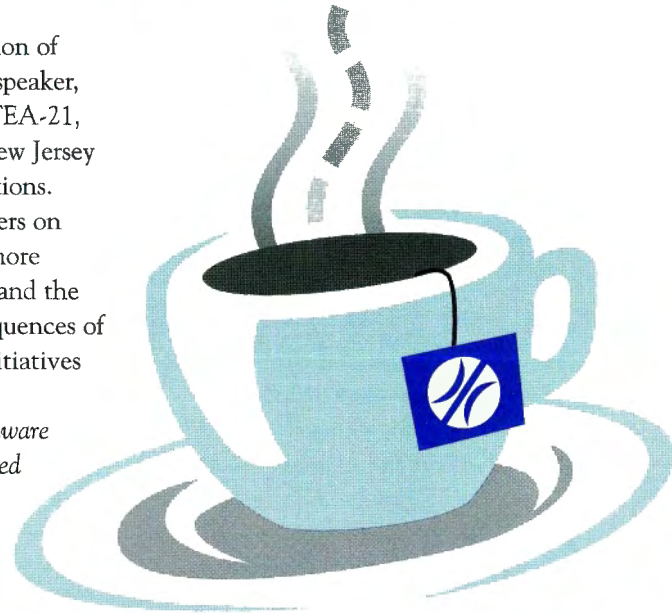
TEA FOR TWO...CONTEMPLATING TEA-21

Preparing to meet the transportation challenges of the 21st Century was the focus of this year's 12th Annual Board Retreat. The theme, *TEA for TWO: TEA-21 and the Interstate Region* set the context for timely discussions on the making of this monumental legislation and its impact on the Delaware Valley. Elected and appointed officials gathered, along with public and private sector representatives, to share up-to-date information on issues that face the region and to find solutions to a more viable transportation future for the region.

Janet Oakley, Director of Transporta-

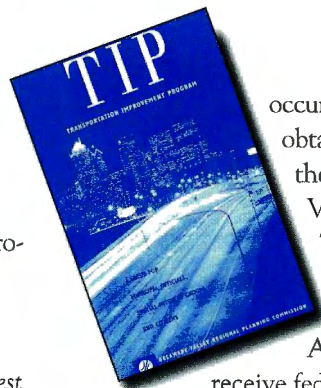
tion for the National Association of Regional Councils and keynote speaker, provided an insider's view into TEA-21, noting that Pennsylvania and New Jersey fared well in financial appropriations.

Three panels featured speakers on initiatives which emphasized a more balanced transportation system, and the environmental and social consequences of these investments. The panel initiatives included *Constructing Intelligent Transportation Systems in the Delaware Valley*, *Ensuring Success in Proposed Suburban Transit Initiatives*, and *Implementing Welfare-to-Work Programs*. ☺



A HOT TIP

All you wanted to know about how municipal officials, special interest groups and citizens can get involved in the region's transportation project development process is outlined in a new DVRPC brochure entitled *TIP — Transportation Improvement Program: A Guide for Municipal Officials, Special Interest Groups and Citizens*. The brochure is an easy-to-read guide that explains in simple terms what the TIP is, why we have one, and how it works. In short, the major milestone in the project development process



occurs when a project obtains a position in the Delaware Valley's regional Transportation Improvement Program, or TIP. A project cannot receive federal funds unless it is in the TIP. The brochure also provides general insight into the transportation planning framework in the region, and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission.



TIP brochures are available to municipal officials, special interest groups and citizens in quantities of 20 or less. To order, contact DVRPC's Public Affairs Office at 215-238-2875. ☺

COMMISSION PREPARES DRAFT FY 1999-2002 TIP FOR SOUTHEASTERN PA

Through December 24, 1998, Delaware Valley residents had a unique opportunity to influence the region's future. That date concluded the 30-day public review period for the draft Fiscal Year 1999-2002 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for the Pennsylvania portion of the Delaware Valley (including Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia counties), and five proposed amendments to the DVRPC Year 2020 Long-Range Plan, as updated in March, 1998. The comment period opened on Monday, November 23.

The DVRPC TIP for Southeastern Pennsylvania contains more than 475 projects totaling about \$3.4 billion over four years. It includes \$1.6 billion in projects related to highway systems and \$1.8

billion in transit-related projects. The Plan Amendments cover five projects: Highland Avenue Extension (Delaware County); PA 23 Relocation; PA 309 to Sunnyside Pike Connector; PA 63 Widening from PA Turnpike to Detweiler (Montgomery County); North Delaware Avenue Extension (Philadelphia); and two studies to widen the Pennsylvania Turnpike, one between Valley Forge and Norristown, and another between Norristown and Lansdale.

The production of the TIP, which is required by federal law, is the culmination of the transportation planning process and represents a consensus among state, regional and local officials as to what improvements to pursue. The TIP includes all projects that intend to use federal funds, along with non-federally

funded projects that are regionally significant. The list is multi-modal; that is, in addition to the more traditional highway and public transit projects, it includes bicycle, pedestrian, and freight-related projects as well.

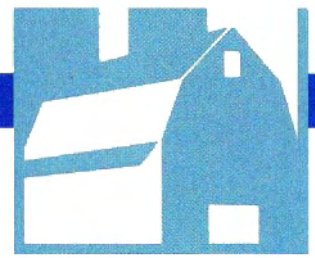
As part of DVRPC's ongoing effort to make decisions *with* the public, not *for* the public, DVRPC held two open meetings, in Philadelphia and in Norristown, to allow citizens to pose questions about the process and projects that affect them. Also during its 30-day public comment period, DVRPC issued media releases, legal notices, and made the TIP document available at numerous libraries throughout the region, as well as over the internet through the DVRPC webpage. DVRPC encourages public participation during all stages of project development. ♻️

TRANSITCHEK TAKES FIRST PLACE

DVRPC's TransitChek program was awarded first place honors in the American Public Transit Association's (APTA) 18th Annual AdWheel Competition. Different aspects of the TransitChek program were entered in the Print, Campaign, and Special Events categories. The winning entry was for "Try Transit Week Events" which competed in the Special Events category against many other programs from all over the United States and Canada. Try Transit Week took place in May with the purpose of promoting different modes of transit to riders and non-riders.

APTA is an international nonprofit organization with 1100 members. Members of APTA were invited to participate in an annual competition of transit marketing, advertising, promotions, and communications. Members have the option to compete in four categories: Print Media, Electronic Media, Campaigns, and Special Events.

As a first place winner, the TransitChek program was honored during a ceremony at the APTA Annual Meeting in New York in October. As DVRPC's TransitChek Policy Committee Chairman, SEPTA General Manager John K. Leary, Jr. accepted the award on DVRPC's behalf.



NJDOT AND DVRPC BEGIN I-295/I-76/NJ42 INTERCHANGE STUDY

As a major hub for Philadelphia/ Camden area commuter traffic, as well as recreational traffic to the New Jersey shore, the I-295/I-76/NJ 42 Interchange serves a diverse travel demand market, and its impact on regional travel is far-reaching. Located on the border of Camden and Gloucester counties, the I-295/I-76/NJ 42 Interchange serves as the principal crossroads of southern New Jersey. As such, this interchange is one of the most congested areas in the state and one of the region's most critical transportation priorities.

According to recent traffic counts by the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) on any given day, approximately 165,000 vehicles travel along I-76 (North-South Freeway) north of the interchange; 100,000 travel NJ 42 south of the NJ Turnpike; while I-295 carries 88,000 through this busy interchange. Non-contiguous roadways and missing ramp movements, combined with this heavy mix of traffic, result in a



series of difficult merging and weaving movements.

A current construction project to widen NJ Route 42, to be completed within the next nine months, will add capacity for traffic south of the interchange. Additional improvements are also being made to I-76. However, these improvements address operational problems in specific areas of the interchange. Other actions may be necessary to deal with remaining problems to ensure that the interchange area is operating efficiently well into the 21st century.

With this in mind, DVRPC and NJDOT have recently initiated a transportation investment study (TIS) for the I-295/I-76/NJ 42 interchange area. The TIS is an essential phase of the planning process, whereby transportation problems are defined and addressed by developing consensus on a broad range of effective and appropriate multi-modal solutions. To this end, the study has been guided by the I-295/I-76/NJ42 Interchange TIS Committee, a group primarily comprised

of county and municipal elected officials, and other governmental and community representatives. The committee is currently considering a wide range of strategies for the area's transportation needs. Public involvement is vital to the TIS objective of facilitating a collaborative planning process to allow the area's decision-makers to develop improvements to the transportation system. As part of this public involvement, the interchange area was the subject of a public meeting on December 1, 1998 in Bellmawr, NJ. Concerned residents from throughout the region turned out to learn more and express opinions about the transportation problems and needs of the interchange area. Public comment regarding all modes of transportation were presented. Representatives from NJDOT and DVRPC answered the public's questions and discussed issues involving the interchange area and concepts for potential improvement. An additional public meeting was held February 3, 1999 in Washington Township, New Jersey.

US 202 (continued from page 1)

information meeting in mid-October, 1998 in which elected officials, business and community leaders, environmentalist and members of the press were presented with a timetable and a project overview. Public and municipal outreach efforts will continue as the CEE progresses. Official project authorization was received December 1, 1998 and completion and approval of the CEE is slated for the summer of 1999. PennDOT estimates that as much as a year has been saved from the overall Section 300 project timetable as a result of the partnership and funding arrangement between the Federal Highway Administration, the department of transportation, Chester County and DVRPC.



REDUCING THE FLOOD RISK IN BUCKS COUNTY

In January and June of 1996, the residents of Bucks County, Pennsylvania found out firsthand about the devastating effects of floods. A January thaw coupled with excess rain and melting snow caused the Delaware River and Neshaminy Creek to crest well above flood stage. In June, a strong cluster of thunderstorms dumped more than nine inches of rain in less than five hours on structures, producing millions of dollars in damages. In the report, *Bucks County Flood Recovery and Mitigation Strategy*, DVRPC explores the development conditions that contributed to the severity of the 1996 floods and develops a flood recovery and mitigation strategy for Bucks County. This study was undertaken as part of a larger effort to assess and respond to flooding risks throughout eastern Pennsylvania, and was funded by the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Although these flood events were triggered by an abnormality in weather conditions, the floods were exacerbated by floodplain development and the increasing amount of area that cannot absorb the moisture. These urbanized conditions prevent water from traveling its normal course and cause an increase in flood frequency and velocity. As the central and lower portions of Bucks County continue to develop, the channelization of small creeks coupled with increased storm water runoff and lack of adequate storm water control, will cause more frequent and severe flood events. In addition, past efforts to reduce flood losses by controlling floodwater, rather than by encouraging people to avoid flood hazard areas, may have added to the damage totals.

The Bucks County Flood Recovery and Mitigation Strategy identifies a variety of specific policies and recommended

actions for improving flood plain management and limiting the potential damage caused by floods.

Major recommended actions include the following:

■ Municipalities should seek to further reduce potential flood damage by adopting and enforcing more stringent regulations controlling development within the 100-year floodplain and flood fringe areas;

■ The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) should provide updated Flood Insurance Rate Maps to communities in order to recognize recent flooding trends. Further, detailed inventories and maps should be created to identify specific areas and structures at risk of flooding. Funding should be provided to complete flood stage forecast maps for the Neshaminy Creek as well as updated maps for the Delaware River;

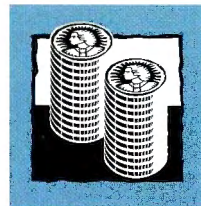
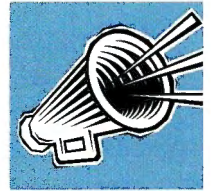
■ The Bucks County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) and Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) should conduct a public outreach campaign to better educate the public living in and around flood prone areas;

■ The National Weather Service, Delaware River Basin Commission, and

Bucks County EMA should coordinate efforts to establish a single source of emergency flood information for the public which should provide flood warnings and identify evacuation routes and relief options; and

■ The Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCEM), Bucks County, and flood-prone municipalities should promote the acquisition of flood-prone areas for community parks and recreational open space.

Bucks County Flood Recovery and Mitigation Strategy is available by contacting DVRPC's Regional Information Services Center at 215-238-2828. ☎



A CLARIFICATION

The information contained in the Roosevelt Boulevard Corridor portion of the ***Moving Down the Line*** article, in the Summer, 1998 issue of *DVRPC News*, should have read as follows:

The City of Philadelphia would like to extend rail transit service along the Roosevelt Boulevard Corridor to Northeast Philadelphia and is planning to proceed with an MIS. The line would be built as an extension of the Market Frankford Line or the Broad Street Subway, or both, and would be compatible with the connecting line. In either case, the line would run in the right-of-way of Roosevelt Boulevard (US 1), but whether to build it as an elevated line or a subway has not been determined.

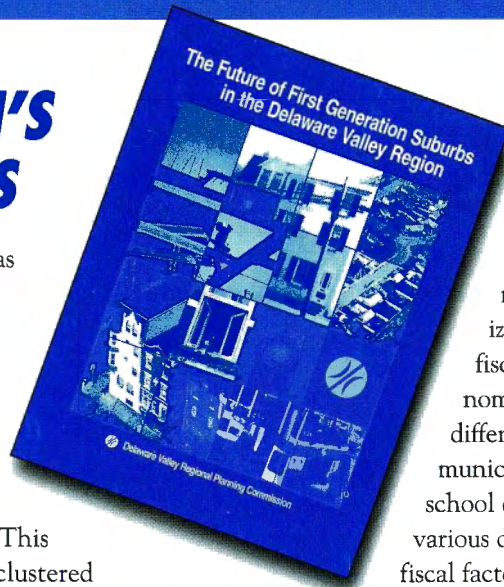
DVRPC STUDIES THE REGION'S FIRST GENERATION SUBURBS

Many of the region's first generation suburbs are currently experiencing fiscal and socioeconomic challenges that until recently were perceived as exclusively urban problems. In recent years the region's continuing cycle of growth and decline has bypassed these "early suburbs". Consequently, first generation suburbs lose middle class households, jobs and tax base, local demand for social services increases, and local ability to finance municipal services and schools comes under stress.

The term, "first generation suburbs", generally refers to the earliest group of townships and boroughs to develop outside of a region's urban core. In the Delaware Valley, this category includes older boroughs throughout the

region that took root as early agricultural and industrial settlements, as well as the suburban bedroom communities that developed rapidly in the decades following World War II. This latter group is largely clustered around Philadelphia and Camden, extending along the region's major roads and highways and along the banks of the Delaware River.

In the report, *The Future of First Generation Suburbs in the Delaware Valley Region*, DVRPC examines the state of the region's first generation suburbs and explores policy and planning strategies to address the challenges that they face. The



report reviews the history of suburban development and regional decentralization; measures fiscal and socioeconomic conditions and differences among municipalities and school districts using various demographic and fiscal factors; and develops recommendations to overcome identified problems through tax reform, regional planning and case studies of successful local revitalization initiatives.

The *Future of First Generation Suburbs in the Delaware Valley Region* is available by contacting DVRPC's Regional Information Services Center at 215-238-2828.

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Since its establishment in 1965, DVRPC has been instrumental in ensuring the orderly growth of the bi-state region. As the federally-funded metropolitan planning organization, DVRPC also provides data and consulting services to public and private sector organizations, and fosters cooperation among all levels of government. Shown above is the nine-county Delaware Valley region.

WINTER 1999