

On The Mark

Development Opening

While development in all sectors has slowed significantly, signs of improvement are welcoming. In Brodheads-ville, Monroe County, a Tractor Supply Company store recently opened. The store building occupies approximately 19,100 square feet of commercial real estate floor space. The Tractor Supply focuses on supplying the lifestyle needs of recreation farmers and ranchers, as well as those individuals who appreciate a rural lifestyle including tradesmen and small businesses.

The store is located on a site that received recent approval for development from the Township. In addition to site improvements, improvements along Route 209 were mandated and permitted by the state as a condition for approval. *Benchmark* Civil Engineering Services, Inc. provided much of the traffic engineering and surveying services required for preparation and approval of the plans. *Benchmark* is proud to see the improvements and the opening of the Tractor Supply Company Store in Brodheads-ville.



Happy New Year!

Welcome 2012. After several years of dismal economic news there appears to be a light at the end of the tunnel. Unemployment is creeping down, consumer confidence is climbing again, and developers are starting to move forward with projects. With the permitting process taking longer, now is the time to start planning new locations so that they are ready when the economy is back in full swing.



The staff at *Benchmark* wishes you the very best in 2012 and looks forward to helping you meet your business and development goals.

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Eliminate That Blind Spot When Driving

I now realize that I have been driving for years with my mirrors pointing at the wrong things. Most cars have a rear view mirror, and mirrors on both the driver and passenger sides of the car. Most people seem to understand how to adjust the rear mirror to capture the best view out of the rear of the car, but the side mirrors are a different story. I am guilty of driving with those mirrors positioned so that I can see down the right and left sides of the car. I am especially fond of the sides of my car so I find this reassuring. The problem is that I am not using the mirror to see the cars that may be in my blind spots on each side of the car. A great explanation is shown on the following link <http://www.cartalk.com/content/features/mirrors/CarTalkMirrors.pdf>. The only problem I have found with this method of setting your mirrors is backing into my garage. I really do need to move my head to see the side of the car for this maneuver!



PennDOT EPS - e-Permitting System

On October 31, 2011, PennDOT began the first phase of its new ePermitting system (EPS). The system will allow applicants for highway occupancy and utility permits to submit plans and support documents in Adobe PDF format and for applicants and their engineers to see the progress of the review process. Applicants will be required to make the initial submission on-line so that they can start the application form and indicate who will be on their project team. Once the application is started, the project engineer will be able to fill in the details of the application and add supporting reports and plans. For each submission the applicant is required to log on and electronically “sign” the application for submission.

At least initially, PennDOT will still require that two paper copies of all submissions be provided and will require payment via a paper check (or account for some utilities). PennDOT anticipates this first phase of the e-Permitting system will be followed by numerous additional phases, each of which will add functionality. With this first phase applicants will be better able to know where in the process their permit is and what progress their engineering team is making.



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Benchmark is excited that this new system will help keep clients informed as to the progress of their applications. We found our first e-Permitting submission went relatively smoothly. *Benchmark* looks forward to using it more in the future.

LANTA Gets Grants for New Facilities

LANTA received news recently that they were being awarded \$14.4 million from the Federal Transit Administration to fund renovations to their Allentown Maintenance Garage and to construct a transit station in Easton. These capital improvement projects have been planned for years but funds were not available until now to move forward with the projects. The Allentown maintenance garage was originally used for trolley car maintenance and has since been renovated to service LANTA's bus fleet. The renovations will allow more efficient operations and will provide the appropriate facilities to service the new hybrid buses.



The Easton transit station is proposed to be a part of a new inter-modal transportation facility located on Third Street and will include a 350 space parking garage and office space. It will be similar to LANTA's Allentown Transportation Center station at Sixth and Linden Streets in Allentown. For more information see <http://www.mcall.com/news/local/easton/mc-allentown-transit->

Chamber Adopts Transportation Policy Supporting Investment



The Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce adopted its Transportation Funding Policy on October 24, 2011. The policy has been under development for more than a year and a half and has included outreach to numerous Chamber committees and members. The policy recommends improvements to the design and approval process for projects, the setting of an appropriate prevailing wage, wider use of tolling, the creation of dedicated funding for the State Police, promoting private-public partnerships, a gradual adjustment of the cap on the oil franchise tax, and the implementation of inflation based increases in fuel taxes and user fees. The full policy can be found at

<http://www.lehighvalleychamber.org/chamber-information/transportation-committee.aspx>

Pete Terry serves as the Chair of the Chamber's Transportation Committee.



Red Light Cameras

The debate about personal liberties rages on, as it should since this is America. Red light cameras are a way to enforce the traffic regulation that says that you cannot drive through a red light. This is a basic safety issue that we can all agree on. When the light is red, you need to stop and yield the right-of-way. The question is, when is the light actually red? A red light camera knows it is red when the indication changes. Drivers think it is red at all sorts of different times. Some of us acknowledge that the yellow indication is a warning that soon the light will change to red. Traffic engineers use equations related to the vehicle's speed and the grade of the intersection approach to make sure that there is enough yellow time to warn drivers so that they can stop before the indication changes.

Of course, depending on your reaction time and your experience, we all know that there is a little wiggle room in there to allow you to safely pass through the intersection. We all know (or should know) the famous scene from the Blues Brothers movie where Elwood has just picked up Jake and they are pulled over for running a red light. While most of us don't then get involved in a high speed chase through a shopping mall, many of us feel that we can talk to the officer who has pulled us over and, worse case, plead our story at the magistrate. Many people feel that with red light cameras they have lost the ability to plead their



case. I imagine that there are municipal entities who have abused the use of red light cameras the same way that I feel there are some who set speed traps. As a traffic engineer and a user of the transportation system, it needs to come down to safety and reasonable laws.

Would it be reasonable if every traffic signal suddenly had a camera and started issuing tickets for running a red light? Maybe it would if we valued the safety benefits. "A 2011 [Insurance Institute for Highway Safety] study comparing large cities with red light cameras to those without found the devices reduced the fatal red light running crash rate by 24 percent and the rate of all types of fatal crashes at signalized intersections by 17 percent." (Hu, W.; McCart, A.T. and Teoh, E.R. 2011. Effects of red light camera enforcement on fatal crashes in large US cities. Arlington, VA: Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.)