Winter 2010

Benchmark
CIVIL ENGINEERING SERVICES, INC.

On The Mark

LVEDC Investor

Benchmark Civil Engineering Services, Inc. has become an investor with the Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation. We look forward to working with the LVEDC staff and other investors to help the Lehigh Valley's economic growth and leadership. *Benchmark* is participating with the Real Estate Development Committee in improving the review and approval process with PennDOT and PA DEP.

www.lehighvalley.org

Lehigh Valley
ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Website Launch

Benchmark Civil Engineering Services, Inc. has launched a new website with a fresh look done by Lee Gustin Creative Designs. It also has new content and a contact form. We especially like the navigation bar!

Check us out at www.bencivil.com

Municipalities Own Pipes in PennDOT Roads

As part of obtaining PennDOT Highway Occupancy Permits for both private and pubic clients, PennDOT insists that most stormwater facilities be permitted in the name of the municipality. PennDOT bases this on highway law which dates back to the 1930's. Many municipalities are reluctant to sign such permits since they do not want to assume the responsibility for maintenance of these pipes.

We often find that many of the existing stormwater systems have not been maintained and require cleaning just so that they can be located and included in the design analysis. Many municipalities already maintain these existing pipes but do not want to take on additional responsibilities associated with a developers project.

Benchmark has been a participant in discussions with our clients, PennDOT and the municipalities in reaching resolution to these issues. Some solutions PennDOT has agreed to include:

- limiting the portion of the system that needs to be maintained and permitted by the municipality,
- allowing the municipality and developer to sign an agreement for future maintenance, and
- allowing the developer to own and maintain portions of the stormwater system themselves.

If you are having challenges with Municipal Stormwater HOP Permits please contact **Pete Terry, P.E., PTOE, PMP** peter.terry@bencivil.com to further discuss the issues.

1727 Jonathan Street, Allentown, PA 18104 | www.bencivil.com
610.776.6700

2009 Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)

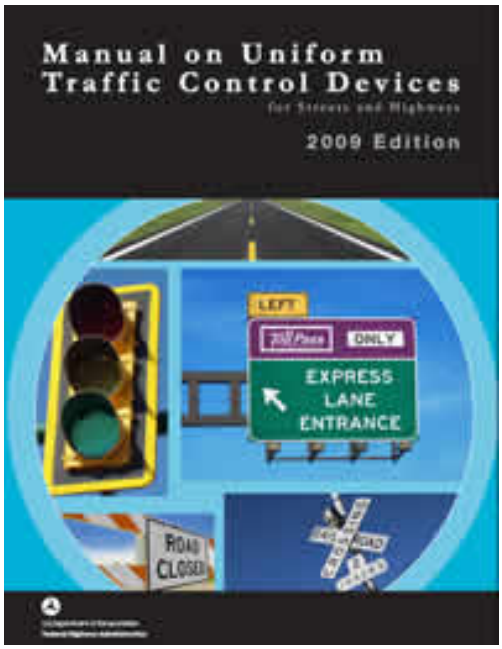
The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) is produced by the Federal Highway Administration and is the national standard for all traffic control devices installed on any street, highway, or bicycle trail open to the public. In December 2009, the MUTCD was updated and includes numerous changes that reflect the current state of the practice.

Many signs frequently used by states have been added as acceptable signs within Part 2 of the 2009 MUTCD. New symbols have been added for toll plaza signage, and the sign color has been standardized. Standards concerning sign size and reduction of lettering size also have been modified. Many methods of drawing extra attention to signs are also provided. Sign locations and relative locations of signs at intersections also have been adopted.

In Part 3, Markings, extensive uses for "dotted" lines have been added. Modifications to the use of reflective pavement delineators have also been made. Part 4, Signals and Part 5, Low Volume Roadways also include significant changes made in the interest of providing adequate direction and warning for drivers.

Perhaps, Part 6, Temporary Traffic Control, has undergone the most significant changes due to the increased amount of highway construction and concern for the significant increases in accident in construction zones. Improved technology and "more safe" construction applications have been added to this revision of the MUTCD.

The remaining parts of the MUTCD address more specific and unique circumstances such as school zones and railroad crossings. Each has been modified due to the increasing concern for safety.



In short, the MUTCD will continue to be a living document with changes to the standards being made and implemented with each revision. The 2009 modifications and revisions are perhaps the most extensive made to the MUTCD. However, this is not surprising as the concern for safety increases, and the technology and the knowledge of how to improve our "uniform traffic control" system develops into the 21st Century. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has yet to adopt this version of the MUTCD via legislative action.

For more information contact **Bernie Telatovich, P.E.** bernie.telatovich@bencivil.com to discuss the MUTCD.

1727 Jonathan Street, Allentown, PA 18104 | www.bencivil.com
610.776.6700

Presentations

Pete Terry, P.E., PTOE, PMP made two presentations at the Transportation and Engineering Conference at Penn State on December 9 and 10, 2009. The first presentation was part of a workshop and was titled a "Case Study of Alternative Analysis Methods at a Major Signalized Intersection." The presentation presented the variation in results found when using different analysis intervals and methods. The second presentation was a preview of the soon-to-be released 2010 Highway Capacity Manual. The presentation described the organization of the new manual and the major advancements that will be available with the new methodologies.

Patiently Waiting on Continuing Education

The action or inaction of the Governor's office on establishing the state's fiscal year budget can set sail to bills introduced to the state legislature or contrarily take the wind out of those same bills. Case in point, House Bill 975 first introduced as Act 170 of 2006 and signed into law on November 29, 2006 by Governor Edward Rendell as Senate Bill 655, requires continuing education credits (C.E.) for Professional Engineers, Geologist and Land Surveyors. The bill requires the registration board to adopt regulations establishing requirements for the completion of 24 hours of continuing education for licensees under the Engineer, Land Surveyor and Geologist Registration Act as a condition for biennial renewal. May 29, 2008 was the 18 month effective date of the act that has come and gone with still no final establishment of the regulations to fulfill the continuing education requirements. The State Registration Board for Professional Engineers, Land Surveyors and Geologists summer 2009 newsletter published a draft of the regulations that were to be promulgated within 18 months of the November 29, 2006 signing into law.

As a board member of the Pennsylvania Society of Land Surveyors (PSLS) Education Committee, I am one of the voices that chooses the topics and speakers for our annual PSLS state conference held in January each year. The committee also provides other seminars for our surveyors that are held during the year. Our decisions are based on many factors, but we still are not able to include the C.E. requirements because they have not been established by the State.

Benchmark believes that the requirement of continuing education for the surveying and engineering professions will help provide the necessary tools to keep our knowledge current with ever changing technology and techniques. *Benchmark* employees participate regularly in training ranging from in-house sessions to conferences to graduate courses, and are ready to comply with the future regulations.

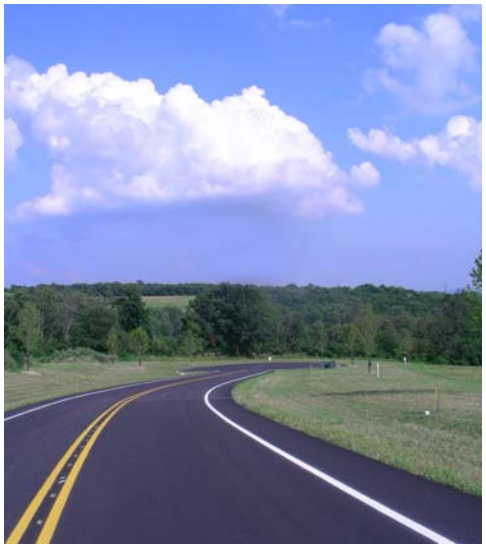
Harrisburg has been focused on the annual budget, but I believe ample time has been given to establish the regulation rules. However, those of us that are waiting for implementation of House Bill 975 are not sure if and when any movement forward will take place.

Bruce F. Gustin, PLS — Vice President - Surveying

1727 Jonathan Street, Allentown, PA 18104 | www.bencivil.com
610.776.6700

Have Development, Will Build

As our elected officials try to find ways to help the country rise out of the economic woes, we find ourselves in interesting territory. There is land ready to be developed. There are businessmen and businesswomen ready to turn their investments into profit. There are people standing in the unemployment line ready to work. We have development and we are ready to build.



Once the money is available for these developments to be built and occupied, how long would it take to get a project from its infancy to construction? This is a question that we at *Benchmark* keep asking ourselves. In fact, this question is important to many people in the development industry. As more knowledge is ascertained concerning the impacts of development, more regulations are being created and modified. The evolution of the development world is accelerating at alarming rates. What was once acceptable and standard practice is now forbidden. What was once thought to be outrageous and too costly is now standard practice. What was never considered before is now part of every project.

Planning has become an even more integral part of any project in today's society. *Benchmark* understands this and is striving to assist our clients in as many ways possible. Continuing education is a key part of our business plan. We also maintain personal contact with the people who review/approve projects. Throughout the planning process, there are many questions that need to be answered. One such question is, "What types of permits/approvals do I need?" Between municipalities, county agencies, and state agencies, the number of approvals needed can be quite extensive. Site features vary considerably from one project to another and *Benchmark* can help you understand what approvals will be needed.

A project that enters onto a state highway will need, at a minimum, a Highway Occupancy Permit (HOP). An HOP can include such items as Right-of-Way acquisition, Transportation Impact Studies, permits for neighbors of the project, releases from neighbors of the project, and utility relocations. Each of these items need special attention and could cause delay. A project that includes grading or other earth disturbance activities could need Erosion and Sedimentation (E&S) approvals, NPDES approvals, grading permits and/or stormwater management approvals. These approval processes can be extensive and lengthy as municipalities, counties and state agencies have certain regulations that need to be met. These regulations are constantly being updated as is the case with the state E&S control regulations and best management practices, which are currently in their public comment periods.

The key point to keep in mind during these economic slow periods is that development can and should continue. The planning stages to a project could take as little as a few weeks for a very simple project to well over two or three years for more complicated projects. The size of the project may be deceiving as the nature of the project and the character of land included in the project are what determine the needed approvals. Planning and permitting a project now will make the development ready to be built as the economy continues to recover.

1727 Jonathan Street, Allentown, PA 18104 | www.bencivil.com
610.776.6700