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## **PA Turnpike Identifies Funding for New Interchange with Lafayette Street Extension**

*Commission commits \$45 million for Montgomery County's proposed interchange.*

**MIDDLETOWN, PA (JAN. 7, 2015)** — The PA Turnpike Commission (PTC) announced today that it has identified funding needed to construct a new interchange joining the Pennsylvania Turnpike (Interstate 276) with the Lafayette Street Extension in Montgomery County. Turnpike commissioners recently committed \$45 million to construct a full on/off connection to be located between the existing Valley Forge and Norristown exits.

The new interchange is a key part of the Lafayette Street Extension Project which was initiated by and is being managed by Montgomery County in partnership with PennDOT and the Federal Highway Administration. The project's goal is to improve highway access and mobility into downtown Norristown and Plymouth Township; the county identified the Lafayette Street link as a top priority among a number of new connections they proposed after a traffic study of the county portion of the Turnpike was conducted.

"County commissioners had a vision about revitalizing the county seat; they took a number of proactive steps to bring this vision to fruition, and they're to be commended for their leadership," said PennDOT Secretary Barry Schoch. "They worked together to identify sites for a new Turnpike connection while fairly balancing the project costs with benefits in terms of economic development and congestion relief. The option they selected accomplishes these objectives while controlling construction costs."

The Lafayette Street Extension Project traces its origins to 1999 when the county funded a feasibility study to determine the cost and viability of such an undertaking. Then in 2001, the county retained an engineering firm to begin preliminary design work. The final design phase was begun in 2008, followed by right-of-way acquisition in 2011. The county awarded the first construction contract for Phase-1 work in 2013 and Phase-2 construction will begin in 2015.

Upon completion, the new interchange will allow motorists to get on and off the PA Turnpike at milepost 331, near the east shore of the Schuylkill River about two miles west of the Norristown Interchange (#333).

"This is an exciting announcement for the Turnpike that illustrates our commitment to making travel more efficient and convenient for our customers," said PA Turnpike CEO Mark Compton. "The new connection will ease congestion at two of our busiest interchanges nearby and reduce backups on other roadways."

The Turnpike's Valley Forge Interchange (#326) handles more than 62,000 vehicles per day (combined entering and exiting) and is the third busiest Turnpike exchange in the state; the Norristown Interchange sees total exiting and entering traffic of more than 25,000 vehicles per day, making it the 11<sup>th</sup> busiest Turnpike toll plaza in the state.

Compton added that the Lafayette Street link exemplifies the PTC's commitment to work with counties and municipalities that border the toll road. The project is being completed under a unique partnering agreement recently inked between the PA Turnpike and Montgomery County.

"In government, there's been a lot of buzz about P3s, meaning Public-Private Partnerships," Compton said. "In this case, we have created a 'public-public' partnership that is getting essential upgrades completed for those who live and work in Montgomery County. At the same time, we are establishing a template for how governments can work together for the benefit of those who use and pay for our roadways."

The Turnpike's funding commitment represents a significant milestone for state and county officials who have long worked to advance the Turnpike link.

"It is truly exciting to have reached this point after a decade of work, because this project is so critical to Plymouth Township, Norristown and Montgomery County," said Josh Shapiro, Chairman of the Montgomery County Commissioners. "This is a game changer as it will be a key part of revitalizing Norristown, improving access to both municipalities, increasing smooth traffic flow and reducing congestion on Ridge Pike and Main Street."

State Rep. Matt Bradford (D-Montgomery) said that the new interchange, while long-awaited, is a crucial investment in advancing the regional economy.

"Having advocated for the Lafayette Street interchange since my first days in office, the benefits of this project cannot be fully weighed in just the positive impact on commuter and commercial traffic," said Rep. Bradford. "This project is hopefully part of opening the Norristown waterfront and our entire county seat to greater economic development. The bottom line is that it is essential for the economic health of the entire region."

Secretary Schoch said the design timetable of the Lafayette Street Interchange was accelerated due to Act 89, the transportation-funding bill passed a year ago by the general assembly and signed by Gov. Tom Corbett.

"The county can advance the project to final design sooner thanks to new revenues from Act 89," Secretary Schoch said. "And the motorists who fund our transportation system — whether by taxes, fees or tolls — get some comfort knowing their investment in infrastructure is actively and directly supporting economic growth."

The final design stage of the interchange, being administered by Montgomery County, is expected to get under way in 2015. PA Turnpike officials estimate the new interchange could start construction as early as 2018, with possible completion by 2020, at the earliest.