

Norristown slip-ramp funding allocated by Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission

By Carl Rotenberg, The Times Herald

Friday, July 15, 2016



PLYMOUTH >> Montgomery County officials and Pennsylvania Transportation Secretary Leslie Richards Friday celebrated \$66 million in funding to build a new slip-ramp interchange that will connect the Pennsylvania Turnpike to the Lafayette Street extension.

The press conference, attended by more than 30 officials from Montgomery County, Norristown and Plymouth, was held under a white tent where the Lafayette Street extension will tie into Conshohocken Road and within eyesight of the Pennsylvania Turnpike.

“The Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission recently committed to fully fund the design and construction of the interchange,” Richards said. “They have committed to this new cashless toll, electronic interchange, EZ Pass only, for the design, right-of-way and construction of this important transportation improvement.”

Matthew Edmond, the transportation section chief for the Montgomery County Planning Commission, said design work and acquisition will take until the early 2020s. Construction could start around 2022, with completion in 2024 or 2025.

Richards said the Norristown slip ramp project was one of seven slip ramps or turnpike interchange projects proposed for Montgomery County. It was selected because it has greatest ability to recoup the construction costs, she said.

Richards said she expected it would take nine to 10 years to recoup the \$66 million investment.

“When all of the construction work on Lafayette Street and Ridge Pike is completed, along with the new interchange, it will culminate over 15 years of planning, design and construction and represent an investment by PennDOT, the turnpike and Montgomery County of over \$150 million,” she said.

Montgomery County commissioners’ Chairman Josh Shapiro said the project “spans five Montgomery County administrations. Government works best when people work together.”

Montgomery County Commissioner Val Arkoosh said she believed the slip ramp will “only take five to six years to pay for itself.”

“This is a major milestone in the Lafayette Street corridor project,” said county Commissioner Joe Gale. “It will help Plymouth and the Ridge Pike corridor and promote the development of the 2.5 miles of Norristown waterfront.”

State Rep. Mary Jo Daley, D-148, said, “I was calculating when I will be able to use this turnpike entrance because my office is in Conshohocken.”

State Rep. Matt Bradford, D-70, said, “This is a truly momentous time. This is an economic development project that could not have been done without the county commissioners going back many terms. Thank you for making this come to pass.”

Norristown Council President Sonya Sanders said, “This is a project that is important to Norristown. We want to attract many businesses to Norristown in the future.”

Plymouth Councilman Christopher Manero said, “This will alleviate traffic on Ridge Pike, Germantown Pike and Butler Pike. Our businesses along Ridge Pike will be positively impacted.”

Norristown Council member Olivia Brady called the slip ramp “great for Norristown.”

“It has already sparked a lot of interest from new businesses because they recognize the marketability of Norristown,” Brady said. “We are really excited.”

The first phase of the Lafayette Street project involved extending Lafayette Street from Ford Street in Norristown to Conshohocken Road in Plymouth.

The second phase of the project, at a cost of \$12.9 million, will extend Lafayette Street to Diamond Avenue in Plymouth Township. The second phase will also reconstruct and widen Diamond Avenue from the Pennsylvania Turnpike bridge to the Norristown border at Ross Street.

The third phase of the project, which is slated to begin in 2017, will widen Lafayette Street to four lanes in Norristown. It also includes rebuilding the drop-off area of the Norristown Transportation Center and connecting the Schuylkill River Trail to the Chester County Trail at DeKalb and Lafayette streets.

The Lafayette Street extension project is 80 percent funded by the federal government and 20 percent funded by the county.

Contact Carl Rotenberg at 267-907-6137 (c) and 484-679-8476.

URL: <http://www.timesherald.com/20160715/norristown-slip-ramp-funding-allocated-by-pennsylvania-turnpike-commission>

© 2016 The Times Herald (<http://www.timesherald.com>)