

Penndot Quietly Re-approves I-80 In Secret — Without Permits

By State Rep. Tarah Probst

Stroudsburg - Despite a formal request by me as the state representative for the area to be informed about the progress of I-80 expansion plans, PennDOT and the Federal Highway Administration quietly reaffirmed their 2020 Finding of No Significant Impact in September 2024 without public notice, without public meetings and without informing me, Stroudsburg Borough or the Monroe County Conservation District.

The decision was made despite a design that violates a 75-foot buffer requirement around a primary vernal pool in the construction path, required by the stormwater management plan adopted by Stroudsburg Borough, and less than adequate evaluations of the vernal pool in a half-hearted Environmental Assessment.

HARRISBURG, May 27 – A newly uncovered internal re-evaluation of the \$935 million I-80 expansion project in Monroe County — newly increased by over \$150 million in taxpayer dollars — reveals that PennDOT and the Federal Highway Administration quietly reaffirmed their 2020 Finding of No Significant Impact in September 2024 without public notice, without public meetings, without notifying Stroudsburg Borough or the Monroe County Conservation District, and without including state Rep. Tarah Probst, a vocal advocate for transparency and one of the project's officially listed public contributors.

The decision was made despite a design that violates a 75-foot buffer requirement around a primary vernal pool in the construction path, required by the stormwater management plan adopted by Stroudsburg Borough, and less than adequate evaluations of the vernal pool in a half-hearted Environmental Assessment.

The re-evaluation clears the path for aggressive land takings and construction along a 3.5-mile stretch of I-80 from Exit 303 to Exit 307 — even though key environmental permits remain unapproved, and recent archaeological investigations confirmed Native American artifacts dating back 5,000–7,000 years along the project corridor.

“From the beginning of the project, PennDOT has continually done the bare minimum required by law. How hard would it have been to do the EIS when requested in 2019 by five local agencies?” said Kristen Battle, chair for the I-80 Task Force, local resident and activist. “This oversight, or purposeful exclusion, is yet another bare minimum. This time it’s affecting the history and environment our area is known for. We will not stop watch over every step of this project until it is right for all.”

Probst, who raised public concerns about the project’s safety impacts, environmental risks, and lack of accountability, was not informed of, or invited to the 2024 FONSI re-evaluation process. Erin DeRosa, the representative’s chief of staff, said Probst had formally requested to be kept updated but was ignored — despite being listed in public documents as a stakeholder and requesting multiple times to be included as a contributing party.

Meanwhile, PennDOT has already begun property acquisitions and final construction planning — even though the following items are still pending:

Chapter 105 Water Obstruction and Encroachment permit.

Chapter 102 NPDES stormwater permit.

Section 404 wetlands permit from the Army Corps of Engineers.

“By moving forward before these permits are approved, PennDOT is not only putting the environment at risk, but it may also be violating federal law,” said Probst. “They’re supposed to wait until the full review is complete, and they didn’t.”

PennDOT also dismissed calls for a sound barrier at LaBar Village — citing “lack of need” — but failed to publish the supporting noise data or allow residents to appeal. The agency’s current design would permanently close Exit 306, forcing emergency services and residents, many of whom are seniors, into longer, slower detours.

Critics argue that PennDOT’s decision to use a wetland mitigation bank in a different county — Sunny Brook, in Wayne County — further distances the project from its environmental obligations and could violate EPA guidelines requiring mitigation near the impact site. Rep. Probst was not included in this plan. The Sunny Brook Wetland Mitigation Bank is an hour and a half drive from the proposed I-80 expansion project in Stroudsburg.

Calls are growing for FHWA to require a full Environmental Impact Statement and for Gov. Josh Shapiro’s office to intervene before construction begins. Advocacy groups are also reviewing options to file for injunctive relief, halt property seizures, and force a



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