

**FREE**

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## Finally, Plans Set for Route 611 to Reopen

By State Rep. Ann Flood

**WATER GAP** - The long-awaited release of a plan to reopen Route 611 in the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area has finally come to a close. As most of you know, the highway was closed in December 2022 due to a rockslide; it is expected to finally reopen in eight to 10 weeks after permits are finalized.

The agreed-upon plans include the installation of a temporary, free-standing rockfall barrier, which will allow two-way traffic to flow while crews continue working behind-the-scenes on a more permanent solution.

This has been a major hardship for everyone in the 138th District and beyond, as drivers have been forced to pay tolls, as well as higher fuel costs, to get around the closed section of roadway. Businesses in the area have struggled or even been forced to close due to the lack of traffic that sustained the area. It's time to put the people first, and the plan unveiled on Friday will do that.

From the very beginning, we have worked hard to keep this issue in front of key decision-makers. We've had the House Transportation Committee chairs tour the closure site with PennDOT, worked closely with Mayor Heather Fischer of Portland, held meetings with residents to hear their concerns and develop solutions, and communicated our concerns with the governor and Secretary of Transportation Mike Carroll. It's taken longer than any of us would have liked, but we can finally see the light at the end of the tunnel.

It took the efforts of many to get to this point. I commend Chris Kufro and the engineers at PennDOT who have worked hard to come up with a temporary resolution to solve a very complex problem. I especially want to thank Mayor Fischer for continuing to put the needs of her community at the forefront and Congressman Matt Cartwright for taking the reins and getting us across the finish line with a workable plan to get this road open by late summer.



State Rep. Ann Flood

## Five Lehigh Valley Sites That Could Benefit From PA's New Economic Development Program

By Paul Muschick

**LEHIGH VALLEY** - When Gov. Josh Shapiro wanted to highlight how Pennsylvania's new budget will rev up the state's economic development engine, he came to the Lehigh Valley to stand in front of a former Bethlehem Steel building that is being redeveloped.

"We needed to make sure that we turn these historical sites into new opportunities," Shapiro said.

The Bethlehem Steel General Office building was the backdrop Shapiro chose to use on July 16 to illustrate the \$400 million PA SITES program that is part of the budget. That program, which seeks to accelerate development by funding infrastructure and other improvements to make sites shovel ready, is the centerpiece of the state's new economic development strategy, which Shapiro also announced in the Lehigh Valley earlier this year.

The 125,000-square-foot Bethlehem Steel General Office building, once the company's headquarters, is being renovated by Peron Development into modern office space that could employ as many as 600 people.

Shapiro celebrated the state Legislature's funding of the PA SITES program with a ceremonial bill signing at the property. Altogether, the state budget includes \$500 million for site development.



(Photo of Gov. Shapiro courtesy of PA Governor's Office. Photo of Bethlehem Steel General Office building by LVEDC)



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