

PennDOT Accepting Applications For 2021-22 Improvements Under Multimodal Transportation Fund

By Sean Brown

Harrisburg, PA – The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) today announced that applications will be accepted to fund new transportation improvement projects under the Multimodal Transportation Fund (MTF) through November 6, 2020.

“The Multimodal Transportation Fund enhances connectivity in our state and allows local projects to benefit all regions,” PennDOT Secretary Yassmin Gramian said. “Projects are selected based on safety benefits, regional economic conditions, technical and financial feasibility, job creation, energy efficiency, and operational sustainability.”

Eligible applicants include municipalities, council of governments, business/non-profit organizations, economic development organizations, public transportation agencies, public airports, airport authorities, and ports and rail entities.

Projects that will be considered should coordinate local land use with transportation assets to enhance existing communities; improve streetscape, lighting, sidewalk facilities, and pedestrian safety; improve connectivity or utilization of existing transportation assets; or advance transit-oriented-development.

In FY 2020-21, 27 projects were awarded more than \$30 million in MTF funding throughout 23 counties, including construction of trail and road access to the new



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10-acre Bridesburg Riverfront Park in southeast region of the state, the installation of 4,100 feet of curb and 2,100 feet of sidewalks/related streetscape work in the northeast region of state, and converting two traditional intersections into modern roundabouts to reduce congestion, improve air quality, and enhance pedestrian mobility in the southeast.

PennDOT expects to announce grant recipients next year, and funding will become available in July 2021.

Act 89 of 2013 established a dedicated Multimodal Transportation Fund that stabilizes funding for ports and rail freight, increases aviation investments, establishes dedicated funding for bicycle and pedestrian improvements, and allows targeted funding for priority investments in any mode.

For more information about the program and previous years' applications and awards, visit www.penndot.gov and click on Multimodal Program under the “Projects & Programs” menu.

Broadband Deployment Could Get a Boost from Senate Action

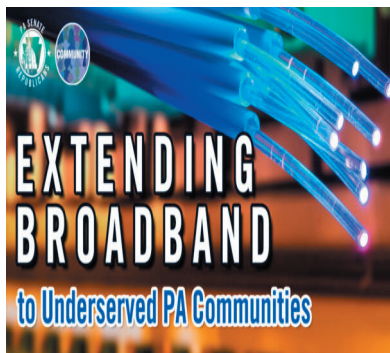
By Michael Ortoski

SLATE BELT - Access to broadband has become even more crucial during the COVID-19 health crisis. This week, the Senate approved a bill that would establish a grant program to extend deployment of broadband services in underserved areas of the state.

The bill would provide more funding to rural areas that currently do not have access to reliable high-speed networks. Since my first day as a State Representative and then a State Senator, I have made infrastructure investment, including broadband and communication networks, a top priority.

This technology is very important for our region, and I'm confident these grants will continue to help us improve broadband infrastructure and reduce the number of cellular 'dead zones' in Monroe and Northampton counties.

Access to broadband has become even more crucial during the COVID-19 health crisis, connecting residents with services and information they would otherwise not have access to. It is also important to those who tele-work, senior citizens, fire and emergency workers and students who are taking classes remotely.



Datacasting

Continued from page 2

at home. Through datacasting, Pennsylvania PBS and its partners will be able to bridge the digital divide, better serving students and families across the Commonwealth.”

The datacasting partnership is one of many of PDE's initiatives to support schools' efforts to implement continuity of education plans.

“PDE is dedicated to creating equitable learning environments for students who must learn from home,” said Secretary of Education, Pedro A. Rivera. “Still too many do not have access to broadband internet. We are excited to work with Pennsylvania PBS to bring the classroom to these students at home through datacasting.”

Pennsylvania PBS has a long history of providing educational, yet entertaining, programming for over 50 years. PBS KIDS, a key component of each station's broadcast schedule, is committed to making a positive impact on the lives of children through curriculum-based entertainment with positive role models and content designed to nurture a child's total well-being. In a January 2019 Market & Research Resources, Inc. survey, PBS KIDS was ranked the #1 “Children's Educational Media Brand” with 71% of the votes.

Pennsylvania PBS first partnered with PDE for the Learning at Home initiative after schools closed in response to the spread of the coronavirus.

“When schools closed on March 16, each PBS station knew that it could help to fill a need,” said Kate Domico, executive director of Pennsylvania PBS. “By working with local Intermediate Units, school districts and PDE, each PBS station crafted curriculum schedules aligned with standards, activity ideas and links to additional online resources. By March 30, we launched learningathomepa.org. Pennsylvania PBS is honored to continue to provide free, instructional programming to kindergarten through twelfth grade learners through our Learning at Home initiative.”

Pennsylvania PBS reports that many school districts and teachers implemented the Learning at Home programming this past spring.

“...PBS offers something for every student I teach. Whether they like music, nature, sports, science, or current events, there is a show that is highly entertaining and educational for each and every one of them. I appreciate there is a show or video for almost anything my 8th grade students are interested in,” reported an 8th Grade English Language Arts teacher in Harrisburg, in an email survey.

Pennsylvania PBS will work with the 29 Intermediate Units and school districts across the state to curate the data instructional units. Resources could include thousands of instructional videos and standards-aligned curriculum for all grade levels available for free at PBSLearningMedia.org, teachers' own lesson plans and recorded lectures.

With the federal funding grant, Pennsylvania PBS will begin implementation of the datacasting pilot program. It expects that students in the first phase of the pilot will begin using datacast instructional units in December 2020.

To find more information about your local PBS station, visit LearningatHomePA.org or:

- WHYY Public Media in Philadelphia
- WITF Public Media in Harrisburg
- Lehigh Valley Public Media in the Greater Lehigh Valley

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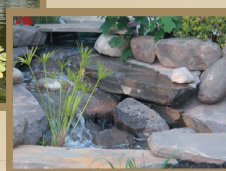
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