



September 16, 2021

Wayne and Sullivan Counties  
Damascus Township and Town of Cochection  
State Route 1002 Section 651  
Skinners Falls Planning and Environmental Linkages Study

Lauren M. Williams, Esq., Owner/Head Counsel  
Greenworks Law and Consulting LLC  
8 Atkinson Drive #1746  
Doylestown, PA 18901

[lmw@greenworkslawconsulting.com](mailto:lmw@greenworkslawconsulting.com)

Dear Attorney Williams:

I am writing on behalf of the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) in response to your letter dated August 24 from Damascus Citizens for Sustainability (DCS) regarding the Skinners Falls Bridge Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study. In your letter you express concern that PennDOT may have excluded comments submitted to PennDOT via email or otherwise sent to PennDOT without a digital or printed survey. Let me assure that this was not the case. All public input received by the project team was considered and will continue to be considered.

PennDOT, along with New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), is committed to complying with 23 CFR 450 and 23 USC Section 168 by providing an opportunity for citizens, government officials, planners, associated stakeholders, and other interested parties to participate in the planning process for the Skinners Falls Bridge PEL Study.

The PEL Study for Skinners Falls Bridge seeks to establish an understanding of the transportation needs and the past and future uses of the bridge, as well as a reasonable opportunity for public input. As detailed below, PennDOT has provided opportunities to the public to participate in compliance with 23 CFR 450 and 23 USC Section 168.

The project team's consideration of public input is demonstrated by the following:

- Phone calls received on the "phone hotline"<sup>1</sup> were documented and a return call was conducted. The project team responded to all requests for information received via the "phone hotline".

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<sup>1</sup> (610) 234-5148

- Every e-mail received by PennDOT and [SkinnnersFallsBridge@aecom.com](mailto:SkinnnersFallsBridge@aecom.com) was acknowledged with a response. Requests for information received via e-mail were responded to from the project email address. A summary of those comments received via e-mail correspondence and outside of the framework of the public survey is under development.
- A tabulation of comments received from the survey was posted to the project website on June 21, 2021<sup>2</sup>.
- The project team developed a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document to respond to study questions that have garnered repeated interest from the public. The FAQ document was posted to the project webpage<sup>3</sup> and has been, and will continue to be, updated as new questions, input, and information becomes available.
- All public input from the sources noted above has been considered as the project team advances the PEL Study and prepares the Purpose and Need document.

To date, consistent with the Federal Regulations and requirements, PennDOT has offered multiple opportunities for the stakeholders, local municipalities, and the public to provide meaningful input to the PEL Study, including:

- A meeting with the Project Advisory Committee (PAC), comprised of designees from local municipalities and stakeholders, was held on February 22, 2021<sup>4</sup>.
- A project-specific webpage was added to the PennDOT District 4-0 webpage.<sup>5</sup>
- A virtual Public Meeting was conducted on the evening of March 30, 2021. The general public was notified of the Public Meeting through a project webpage notification, newspaper advertisements in four local newspapers, a

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<sup>2</sup> < <https://www.penndot.gov/RegionalOffices/district-4/PublicMeetings/Wayne%20County/Documents/Survey%20SummaryR7.pdf> >

<sup>3</sup> < <https://www.penndot.gov/RegionalOffices/district-4/PublicMeetings/Wayne%20County/Documents/SFB%20Draft6%20FAQs%2020210521.docx.pdf> >

<sup>4</sup> Representatives from the following organizations were invited to participate in the Skinnners Falls PEL PAC: National Park Service, Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River, Wayne County Planning Commission, Sullivan County Division of Planning, Community Development and Real Property, Damascus Township, Town of Cocheton, Upper Delaware Council, Inc., Wayne County Board of Commissioners, PennDOT District 4-0, PennDOT Central Office, FHWA, and NYSDOT Region 9

<sup>5</sup> < <https://www.penndot.gov/RegionalOffices/district-4/PublicMeetings/Wayne%20County/Pages/Skinnners-Falls-Bridge-Project.aspx> > {accessed 9/15/2021}

press release, a local radio interview, and coordination with the Upper Delaware Council. Additionally, PennDOT sent direct invitations to federally recognized Tribal governments, state agency contacts, and known parties of interest. A recording of the meeting was made publicly available on the project webpage.

- Following the virtual Public Meeting, a contact e-mail ([SkinnnersFallsBridge@aecom.com](mailto:SkinnnersFallsBridge@aecom.com)) and a “phone hotline” were established to collect public input.
- An online survey<sup>6</sup> using SurveyMonkey a federally approved application was posted to the project website and made available to the public on March 31, 2021. The standard public survey is usually active for 30 days. The survey public participation period was extended an additional 30 days beyond the standard 30 day-period for a total of 60 days due to public request. The extension was widely advertised to the public through variable message signs positioned at the project site, a press release, newspaper advertisements in four newspapers, post card mailings to local residents, and placement of additional post card flyers at local businesses. PennDOT also distributed specific letter and e-mail notifications to recognized Tribal governments, state agency contacts, and known parties of interest.
- Inquiries were also received through PATH, PennDOT’s online system for public engagement and participation in Section 106.
- Stakeholder interviews with local business and emergency service providers were held from May 3, 2021 to June 15, 2021.

In addition, further opportunities for public input will be provided as the current PEL Study advances and the project continues into the NEPA, Section 106, and Section 4(f) processes. Anticipated future opportunities for stakeholder, municipality, and public input include:

- A second PAC meeting, which is scheduled for September 23, 2021.
- The draft Purpose and Need document will be posted to the project webpage and PATH for a 30-day public review and comment period. The Purpose and Need document will be accompanied by the draft PEL Study report. It is anticipated that the comment period will occur in the Fall of 2021.
- PennDOT, NYSDOT, and FHWA will continue to engage the consulting parties and the public via the project webpage, future press releases and

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<sup>6</sup> SurveyMonkey is federally approved (SurveyMonkey’s Gov’t Terms of Use can be found here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/legal/privacy/>). The report on the Survey responses is only one piece of the project team’s consideration of the public responses received; responses not included in this report were still considered by the project team.

future public meetings throughout the NEPA, Section 106, and 4(f) processes following the completion of the PEL Study.

In conclusion, PennDOT has afforded the public a meaningful opportunity to comment and participate in this step of the PEL process in accordance with Federal requirements.

PennDOT is committed to planning for the future needs of the statewide transportation system which supports the safe and efficient movement of people and transport of goods. Public participation is an important component to PennDOT's projects. We welcome any additional questions or concerns from DCS on this matter.

Sincerely,



Richard N. Roman, P.E.  
District Executive

cc: Damascus Citizens for Sustainability, [DCS@DamascusCitizens.org](mailto:DCS@DamascusCitizens.org)  
Laurie Ramie, Upper Delaware Council  
Joseph Salvatore, National Park Service  
Emma Diehl, PHMC, SHPO  
Richard N. Roman, P.E.  
Susan E. Hazelton, P.E.  
Susan Williams  
Kris Thompson  
Heather Gerling