Letter from the Secretary

May, 2002

To the Residents of Pennsylvania:

What’s the best way to achieve long term goals for the Commonwealth’s transportation system? Make sure they reflect the public’s needs and hopes, then tie them to specific objectives and report on progress. That’s what the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation has done, evidence this second annual report on achievements toward the statewide and corridor objectives of PennPlan Moves!, the Pennsylvania Statewide Long Range Transportation Plan, 2000 to 2025.

Such an approach may seem obvious, but making themselves accountable to the public for a plan’s implementation has not been something that organizations usually commit to. Perhaps that’s why they’re noticing our efforts. Departments of transportation from Maine to Washington have requested PennPlan Moves!, last year’s Report of Achievements 2000, and other PennPlan materials. So have agencies in Canada, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. Some wanted information specific to the public involvement effort through which we determined the wishes of our transportation system’s users. Here are comments from two reviewers: “PennPlan provides an excellent illustration of performance-based planning and its application at the statewide level.” “The achievement report shows implementation; that’s terrific!”

While we appreciate the favorable interest, there is no time to rest on our laurels, for much work remains. This Report of Achievements 2001 illustrates that we have been tackling it. On several fronts, we are addressing congestion. These include establishing regional traffic management centers, deploying intelligent transportation systems (ITS), and, as indirect approaches, promoting mass transit, improving its infrastructure, and assessing passenger rail needs. ITS, which also play a role in enhancing safety, are in evidence across the Commonwealth as variable-message signs that alert us to traffic conditions, closed-circuit television, traffic-detection devices, and Highway Advisory Radio. In the statewide corridors, safety and the mitigation of congestion are the objects of hundreds of projects that involve widening and rebuilding of highways and intersections, and installation of the latest safety features.

Improving in an area where we lagged in 2000, we have identified potential intermodal locations and are establishing connections, as in construction of a ramp at the Philadelphia International Airport/I-95 interchange and in plans for an Amtrak station at Harrisburg International Airport. Yet more must be done to provide for seamless movement of people and goods among the various modes of transportation.

With the help of our partners—thanks to them for their continuing efforts—we will attain PennPlan’s objectives. In this important undertaking, we whole-heartedly invite your input, too.

Sincerely,

Bradley L. Mallory
Secretary of Transportation
This is the second annual report of progress toward objectives of the Pennsylvania Statewide Long Range Transportation Plan, called *PennPlan Moves!* or, simply, PennPlan, published in January 2000. The *Report of Achievements 2001* shows significant progress toward PennPlan’s statewide and corridor objectives. It also points to some shortcomings, which are to be expected when a plan includes ways to measure progress specific to each objective. We value the information, because both our progress and our shortcomings reveal what remains to be done.

An initiative of the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PENNDOT) to anticipate and shape a response to the Commonwealth’s need for transportation facilities and services in the first quarter of the 21st Century, PennPlan is a framework for highways, transit facilities, passenger and freight railroads, air and water ports, and bicycle and pedestrian trails, and how they connect to form a system.

Three attributes distinguish PennPlan from the many transportation plans developed over the years in Pennsylvania and other states:

- Its 10 statewide goals reflect findings from a comprehensive program of public involvement.
- As a result of much consultation with metropolitan planning organizations, local development districts, and county and local planning organizations, PennPlan identifies objectives at both the corridor and Commonwealth levels that focus development of the transportation system on the 10 statewide goals.
• Most important, as noted in the opening, PennPlan’s objectives are accompanied by ways to measure their attainment and target dates or amounts to gauge their degree of implementation.

In other words, PENNDOT has made itself accountable for the timely execution of PennPlan, an uncommon approach to long range planning. The plan says exactly what we intend to do and when we intend to do it. In the spirit of accountability, we offer this report on second-year progress toward PennPlan’s 25-year vision.

STATEWIDE ACHIEVEMENTS 2001

First presented is progress toward each statewide objective, shown in an easily read table along with the objective, its performance measures, and its targets. The statewide objectives apply across the Commonwealth, as in the objective to “improve pavement ride quality.”

Targets for some of the 30 statewide objectives call for progress near term as well as longer term. For the objective to “improve pavement ride quality,” which uses the International Roughness Index (IRI) as its performance measure, the targets call for an IRI measurement of 104 or lower by 2002 and 99 or lower by 2005 on Pennsylvania’s National Highway System roads. As years go by, trends and progress, or lack thereof, will be discernible. In this case, an IRI measurement of 101 in 2000 (with measurements of 113 in 1997, 107 in 1998, and 103 in 1999) signified success near term, while another 101 measurement in 2001 indicates a plateau from which to improve in 2002 if we are to meet the overall target of 99 by 2005. (The lower the IRI measurement, the smoother the pavement. See illustration on page 5.)

Other objectives have targets that must be met annually for the 25-year life of the plan. For example, the objective to “adhere to maintenance-first policies in the allocation of financial and other resources” has a target of 80 percent for the resources PENNDOT expends annually on maintenance programs and projects, as opposed to resources it expends for transportation system expansion. While the target was not hit in 2000 or 2001, the percentage increased to 78 in 2001 from 71 in 2000.

CORRIDOR ACHIEVEMENTS 2001

Progress toward objectives in 28 corridors of statewide significance is presented in a table under each corridor. While performance measures and targets were not associated with these objectives because of their great number and variety, there was no scarcity of activity toward most of them. Furthermore, most corridor objectives are specific to the point that residents will easily gauge whether the achievements listed truly represent progress.

For example, one of the objectives of The Delaware and Lehigh National Canal Heritage Corridor is to “implement terminal improvements at the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport.” Progress toward this objective: “Contracts for a parking garage
and new loop road were awarded, part of a $60-million project to include construction of a new passenger terminal.”

Because of the extent of transportation system development in the corridors, only achievements that will have a major impact on movement of people and goods were reported as progress toward corridor objectives. While significant, local-road projects, such as bridge replacements, were not reported here.

ADJUSTMENTS

In PennPlan’s conclusion, we noted that the plan “is designed to embrace change” and that “course corrections will be made when public input and other factors dictate them.” In 2000, it was necessary to bring performance measures and targets for three objectives in line with the more immediate goals of a new strategic plan for transportation. PennPlan, with a broader vision, complements the strategic plan.

In 2001, we realized that while statewide objective 5 was based on good intentions, its attainment would involve much effort for little return. It calls for developing and implementing “a program to analyze environmental impact in conjunction with PennPlan’s corridor analysis program.” However, analyses of environmental impact are valid for short periods of time and are best performed during the design phase of individual projects. If performed for potential projects along an entire corridor, many would be obsolete by the time the projects hit the drawing board, if the projects were funded at all. Therefore, objective 5 will not be addressed.

Its ability to adjust to new information demonstrates PennPlan’s flexibility. The changes do not result in a lowering of PennPlan’s standards.

PLANS PLUS PROJECTS EQUAL PROGRESS

In Report of Achievements 2001, you will see how projects and programs underway across the state are helping to fulfill the long range vision articulated in PennPlan. Demonstrating such a connection was one of the ideas behind the re-engineering of Pennsylvania’s transportation planning and programming process that resulted in PennPlan.

For example, reduction of congestion and enhancement of safety are focuses of a number of PennPlan’s statewide objectives, as well as many corridor objectives. Furthermore, two of the overall statewide goals that the objectives support relate specifically to mobility and safety. So do two of the themes from the public involvement, which the goals reflect. By touring this report, you will see that progress has been made in congestion relief and safety. It can be seen statewide in the establishment of traffic management operations, the reduction of highway fatalities, and the increase in transit systems’ ridership. In the corridors, the many projects that involve widening and new construction of roadways, installation of safety devices, upgrade of signal systems, and improvement of rail and transit lines provide evidence of progress. (The matrix at right shows the correspondence between the statewide goals and the themes for transportation system development that emerged from PennPlan’s public involve-

Report of Achievements 2001, by also demonstrating our commitment to involve and inform the public in the process of transportation system development, represents yet another milestone in transportation planning in Pennsylvania. We hope you’re enjoying the ride.