FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Pennsylvania Details State Highway Plans, Resource Requests for Papal Visit

Harrisburg, PA – Today, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania outlined its plans to help manage needs for public safety, public health and transportation during the Papal visit.

“Pennsylvania is committed to supporting event planning partners to prepare and help ensure a safe, secure Papal visit for residents of Philadelphia and surrounding areas in addition to all of the visitors from around the world,” Governor Tom Wolf said. “Due to the size and scope of the event and the large crowds expected, Philadelphia and event organizers requested assistance from the commonwealth. We are ready to assist event organizers and planners to keep people safe and make this historic Papal visit to Philadelphia a success.”

Planning for the event is being led by the United States Secret Service, along with the City of Philadelphia and the World Meeting of Families. As requested, Pennsylvania is providing resources, including personnel and equipment, to assist with public safety, security, public health, transportation and emergency management.

Due to street closures in the City of Philadelphia and the needs of law enforcement and emergency agencies, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation will close the following roads beginning on Friday, September 25th at 10 p.m.:

- I-76 eastbound from I-476 to I-95 and I-76 westbound from I-95 to U.S. Route 1 (Roosevelt Extension);
- I-676 in both directions from I-76 to I-95; and
- U.S. Route 1 in both directions from U.S. 30 to Belmont Avenue.

Please click here for a map: State roads during Papal visit

These are the only roads under PennDOT's jurisdiction that are expected to be closed. PennDOT is not anticipated to be responsible for any other closures.
Contrary to previous reports, I-95 will remain open to traffic with only selected ramps closed due to street closures within the city and security needs.

It is necessary to close portions of these roads to effectively move emergency vehicles to, through and from the event area, and because thousands of buses will be travelling to and from the event as well as to maintain public safety. Traffic will be routed to surrounding highways and PennDOT will remind drivers of these traffic changes from now through the Papal visit. In addition, PennDOT will coordinate with Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, and police and emergency medical services agencies to have health and safety action teams stationed on open highways where traffic will increase to assist motorists.

In order to assist local and federal law enforcement with public safety and crowd management efforts, the Pennsylvania State Police will provide approximately 1,100 requested personnel to the City of Philadelphia for the Papal visit. The Secret Service has further requested Pennsylvania National Guard members to assist with traffic management within the City of Philadelphia. The commonwealth anticipates fulfilling additional National Guard requests from surrounding counties.

“The Pennsylvania State Police will provide vital staffing assistance to the Secret Service and Philadelphia Police,” Governor Wolf said. “The men and women of the Pennsylvania National Guard – who are our friends, family members and neighbors – will primarily assist with traffic management. They will support law enforcement to keep visitors and residents safe and will play an important supportive role in making sure people can get to, through and from the event.”

The Department of Health will provide requested Emergency Medical Services teams, ambulances and other transports, and other equipment and supplies necessary to provide adequate public health coverage for the anticipated crowds. The Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency and Department of Human Services will be on-site during the Papal visit to provide resources and coordination in the event of an emergency.

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FAQ

Transportation

Why are state roads being closed?

As a result of requests from local governments and law enforcement, road closures within the City of Philadelphia and needs of law enforcement and first responders to maintain public safety, the
Pennsylvania Department of Transportation will close various sections of state highways during the Papal Visit to Philadelphia. The highway restrictions will also best serve the travel demands in the region for moving event buses and emergency vehicles throughout the weekend.

What roads will be closed?

The amount of road closures within Philadelphia, the anticipated large crowds, and the necessity for law enforcement and first responders to be able to travel within the city would make it near impossible for regular interstate travel to occur on many highways.

Only these roads will be closed beginning on Friday, September 25th at 10 p.m.:

- I-76 eastbound from I-476 to I-95 and I-76 westbound from I-95 to U.S. Route 1 (Roosevelt Extension);
- I-676 in both directions from I-76 to I-95; and
- U.S. Route 1 in both directions from U.S. 30 to Belmont Avenue.

Will I-95 be closed?

Contrary to previous reports, I-95 will remain open to traffic with only selected ramps closed due to street closures within the city and other security needs.

What other roads will be closed?

These are the only roads under PennDOT’s jurisdiction that are expected to be closed. Other closures in the City of Philadelphia will be closed by the city streets department, law enforcement or event organizers.

How will you help drivers on other highways?

PennDOT and Pennsylvania State Police will work with PEMA and local EMS providers to ensure additional access to health and safety resources for travelers.

Who will manage traffic during the Papal visit?

PennDOT is working closely with State Police, Philadelphia Police, Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission, County Emergency Operation Centers, and other regional and out-of-state transportation agencies to coordinate the traffic management plan during the Papal weekend. The Federal Highway Administration has reviewed and approved PennDOT’s traffic management plan.

How will PennDOT let drivers know about highway closures?

PennDOT is working with its neighboring mid-Atlantic transportation agencies to deploy a cohesive, long-distance travel advisory and diversion plan utilizing electronic Highway Message Signs to inform Philadelphia-bound travelers of locations of road closures; to provide information on alternatives for “through traffic” desiring to avoid the Philadelphia area; and information for those
attending the Papal event.

Through this coordination, PennDOT and neighboring states will maximize the use of all available electronic Highway Message Signs from Baltimore to Scranton and throughout New Jersey to provide citizens with real time traffic information during the heaviest travel times, expected from Thursday, Sept. 24 through Monday, Sept. 28.

**Why does PennDOT need to work with other states?**

The aim of this interstate coordination is to disseminate travel information to encourage “non-Papal event” traffic to use alternate routes outside the metro Philadelphia area and divert as much “through” traffic as possible from the Philadelphia region.

**Will there be any other restrictions?**

Further restrictions will be in place for moving oversized and super loads through Pennsylvania during the week of the WMOF.

**Public Health**

**How is the state helping event organizers with public health?**

Due to the size and diversity of the population of expected visitors for the World Meeting of Families and the Papal visit, the Pennsylvania Department of Health is working with Philadelphia Office of Emergency Management and Emergency Medical Services to ensure there is adequate infrastructure on site for public health needs. Event organizers and the City of Philadelphia have requested public health support from the commonwealth.

**Who is coordinating public health resources?**

The Department of Health, in conjunction with Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency and the Philadelphia Office of Emergency Management, will coordinate the resource requests by working with providers across the state and surrounding states.

**What resources is the state supplying to assist with public health needs?**

These resources include EMS teams, ambulances and utility vehicles, portable medical and health structures, cooling centers and other public health resources. Further, the Department of Health will work with the City of Philadelphia and World Meeting of Families to educate visitors on how to prepare and keep themselves healthy during the event.

**Public Safety and Security**

**Why is the state sending public safety personnel to Philadelphia?**
The scale and size of the Papal visit and anticipated crowds will require the Secret Service, City of Philadelphia and surrounding areas to increase the number of public safety personnel and resources on hand. As a result, various entities, including the Secret Service and Philadelphia, have requested assistance, resources and personnel from commonwealth agencies.

**What role will the Pennsylvania State Police play?**

At the request of the event hosts, the Pennsylvania State Police is preparing to send nearly 1,100 troopers from throughout the commonwealth, to Philadelphia to assist the Philadelphia Police and the Secret Service. Additional troopers will be added to roadways expected to have increased traffic during the visit. Working with PennDOT and PEMA, these troopers will have the primary purpose of assisting motorists and managing traffic.

**Why is the Pennsylvania National Guard involved?**

Pennsylvania National Guard members will assist the Secret Service and law enforcement with helping crowds move through the event area and keep routes open for emergency vehicles and law enforcement. The National Guard is members of our community who often are called to help during large-scale events.

**What will National Guard members do at the event?**

Their primary goal will be to keep visitors and residents safe, as well as to manage road closures and direct traffic towards detours. The number of National Guard members in the City of Philadelphia and surrounding areas is still being determined.