

27th Annual Road/Bridge Safety Improvement Program

Mahanoy City Streetscape

2009 Award Winner



AFTER the IMPROVEMENT

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Planning for the five-phase Mahanoy City Streetscape undertaking began over five years ago. Improvements have been made in the center of downtown including the intersection of Main and Centre Streets. The streetscape improvements include new curbs and sidewalks, drainage structures, roadway restoration, traffic signal upgrades and landscaping. Landscaping improvements included planting urban tolerant trees within the streetscape project limits. Numerous decorative features such as historic low-mount gas replica lighting, benches, planters and trash receptacles were also included in this project. Intersection improvements consist of new replica brick crosswalks and four-foot bulb-outs on each corner for pedestrian safety and traffic calming. The crosswalks were completed using a modified resin-based, synthetic asphalt compound that is ADA compliant and approved by PennDOT. This project has made a significant impact on the look and feel of downtown Mahanoy City, but more importantly it has improved pedestrian and motorist safety.

SAFETY

Crosswalks and bulb-outs, such as the ones that were installed, are proven to calm traffic and increase pedestrian safety. Bulb-outs reduce the pedestrian crossing time and the crosswalks emphasize the pedestrian crossing area for motorists and pedestrians alike. For motorists, the crosswalks, which are a color visibly distinct from the road surface, are much easier to see and are a reminder to slow down. These improvements will reduce intersection congestion, traffic delays and crashes.

MEASUREABLE IMPROVEMENT

As part of the streetscape project, the curb ramps were made ADA accessible, which was particularly important because of the location of a high-rise apartment building within the project limits where many senior citizens live. The pre-existing sidewalks were deteriorating, uneven and contained cross slopes greater than ADA specifications. Visual observations and discussions with borough representatives indicate motorists are responding in a favorable manner. Mahanoy City was a major center of anthracite coal production during the height of the Pennsylvania coal mining era. There has been a major effort within northern Schuylkill County to revitalize historic communities. Future phases will continue to implement the Borough's long-term transportation plan.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Since pedestrian safety was the borough's main concern, maintaining the previous curblines was not acceptable. Additionally, due to the amount of elderly residents in this area, it was determined that a shorter pedestrian crossing time was necessary. A variation of a typical bulb-out consisting of pavement markings on the road surface to delineate pedestrian areas was considered. Based on simulations that were conducted, it was determined that a four-foot bulb-out would be the most beneficial curb extension that would allow all vehicles which PennDOT determined used this intersection to make the turning movements. The bulb-outs reduced the crossing by eight feet, which is estimated to decrease an elderly person's crossing time of nearly three seconds. The replica-brick crosswalks were chosen instead of traditional line-painted crosswalks for their aesthetic appeal as well as their traffic calming effect.

RESOURCE UTILIZATION

The project was funded through federal and state funding with a local match. Mahanoy City received a PennDOT Hometown Streets Grant, Department of Community and Economic Development Block Grant, U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development Grant, and Housing and Urban Development Economic Initiative Grant. Borough forces and Mahanoy Downtown, Inc. volunteers were used to help minimize costs. The overall cost was \$700,000.

TIMELINESS

"We did this project to inspire businesses to come back to the local area, and also to bring residents to the downtown," James J. Rhoades Jr., Borough Engineer stated. All improvements met applicable local land space use and planning regulations. The Council's goal to make the Mahanoy City Central Business District a safer place began in 2004. "It was a big project that involved a lot of planning and a lot of PennDOT work," Jerry Teter, Mahanoy City Borough Manager concluded.

