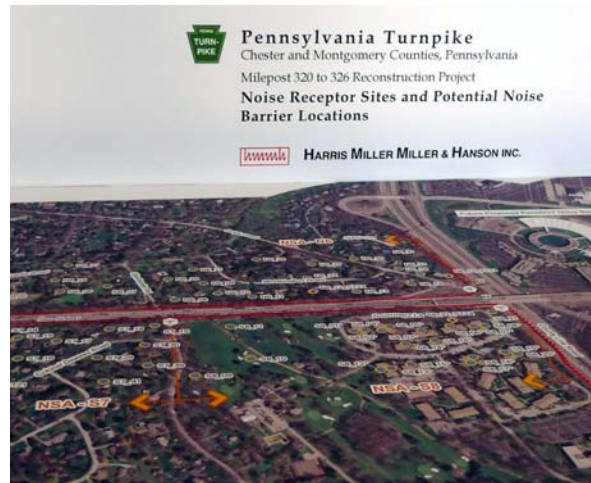


# PA Turnpike Widening: Eminent Domain Impact

Report by Kathleen Keohane

March 3, 2009

The Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission (PTC) held an Open House on January 27 to display their design plans for the road widening project through Tredyffrin Township. Currently, construction is scheduled to begin in 2011, with design plans to be finalized in 2010. The project, which will add two lanes of traffic and increase the width of the roadway by 40 feet, also addresses sound mitigation and storm water management.

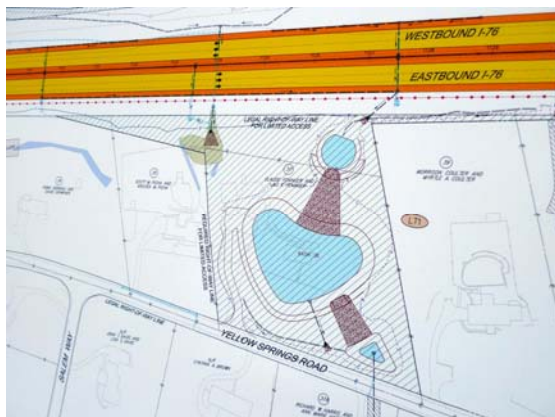


So far, the community's reaction to the PTC's plan has been uniformly negative.

## Ninety-seven Homes

Resident turnout for the Open House was surprisingly good, given bad weather that evening and the fact that the PTC had provided little notice. Those attending clustered in [groups around display panels](#) corresponding to their neighborhoods along the turnpike. Many were dismayed when they learned the PTC plan targets 97 Tredyffrin properties for partial or total acquisition. This includes the demolition of eight homes – five from the western end of Yellow Springs Road, two from the Green Hills section of Chesterbrook and one from the northern side of Glenhardie.

## Stormwater Drainage Basins



In their place, large evaporation drainage basins will be constructed – some over 200 feet in diameter- to hold storm water runoff from the 6-lane roadway.

The other acquisitions range in size from large sections of property along the roadway to slivers of land to be used as right-of-ways. If the plan is approved, the PTC would compensate these property owners based on fair market value. However, no one could refuse to sell under the state's power of eminent domain.

## Sound Barriers

Noise from the turnpike reaches far beyond the adjacent streets. For most affected residents there is one encouraging note: the design plan indicates that absorptive sound

walls will be included for all but 36 affected homes along the turnpike. Those unlucky few do not meet the cost-benefit standard set by the Department of Environmental Protection and adopted by the PTC. However, note that legally the PTC has not yet committed to providing sound walls, though they appear on the plan. Also, not indicated are the height and composition of the walls – all-important factors in lowering noise pollution, and still to be determined in accordance with Tredyffrin’s noise ordinance.

### **February Public Comment**

Representatives from the PTC sponsored a Roundtable meeting on February 26 to hear public comment on the design plan. Those attending included representatives of all interested community and civic groups as well as several Township supervisors, Township Manager Mimi Gleason and Township Engineer Steve Burgo, state Representative Paul Drucker and state Senator Andy Dinniman.

An expert in storm water management, Mr. Burgo told TP representatives that Tredyffrin will not approve the PTC’s current storm water management plan, and that an acceptable plan should keep as much runoff as possible on turnpike property. Pattye Benson, head of Tredyffrin Historic Preservation Trust, spoke to the importance of preserving historic homes and the quality of life in our neighborhoods. Senator Dinniman spoke forcefully on behalf of residents, warning TP officials to listen carefully to the outcry and minimize the taking of residential property. He urged the PTC to come back with “a serious plan.” All in all, PTC representatives “got an earful from our Township”, according to Lou Erdelan, chair of the Great Valley Association.

### **Upcoming March Meeting**

The next Roundtable meeting is scheduled for March 26 at which sound wall coverage, height and construction will be discussed. Participants are included by invitation only, but every effort is being made to include a representative of all stakeholder groups.

If interested in viewing the PTC’s design plan, it is on display at the Township Building. Your comments and concerns should be directed to these PTC officials: Kevin Scheurich, Project Manager, P.O. Box 67676, Harrisburg, PA 17106. The local contact is the Engineering Project Manager Donald Steele, 251 Flint Hill Rd., King of Prussia, PA 19496. He may be reached at (610) 292-3975. Also, you can contact your supervisors at [bos@tredyffrin.org](mailto:bos@tredyffrin.org).

Additional resources:

[Jan. 27 Meeting Handout](#)

[Turnpike Expansion Project FAQs](#)

[Turnpike Commission’s Project Website](#)

[Turnpike Commission’s Noise Analysis Report](#) (216 pgs., very large 42MB file)