

SECURITY

Providing a secure transportation system involves the planning and implementation of programs that protect people, freight, and the transportation infrastructure from both natural and manmade disasters. Nationally, the Federal government has instituted several programs to help secure the transportation assets across the country, as well as guide and coordinate emergency management activities. Locally, emergency management programs at both the state and local levels aim to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters that may compromise the transportation infrastructure and be hazardous for the people who use them.

MAP-21 identifies the security of the transportation system as a separate planning factor for consideration in the LRTP. The key agencies involved in the security of the Berks County transportation network include: PennDOT, Pennsylvania State Police (PSP), Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, Berks County Department of Emergency Services and local police and fire departments. RATS does not have primary responsibility for security issues, although some security issues may have an impact on transportation programs at the regional level. The MPO role in security may take many forms including facilitator, participant, or leader in the security-related activities.

When crashes, unexpected incidents, or adverse weather conditions occur, accommodating or detouring traffic quickly becomes a priority focus of managing the incident. Detouring interstate traffic and heavy truck volumes onto lesser state roads, along busy arterials, or through residential areas is a challenge to accomplish safely and efficiently. Although unexpected incidents occur on all levels of roadway, emergency gates have been added at five Interstate-78 interchanges as part of larger construction projects, as shown on Map 39, to restrict traffic from detouring onto local roads, stop additional traffic from entering the interstate, and protect first responders and related personnel during serious incidents created by crashes and/or weather. In response to a serious incident or weather, these gates with active warning lights would be pulled down in addition to flipping signs to inform motorists of ramp closures.

In addition to the contribution of safety provided by the emergency gates, a temporary traffic signal exists at the State Route 737 interchange, and one is proposed for installation at the State Route 143 interchange. These temporary traffic signals provide another layer of protection and traffic control during incidents where Interstate-78 traffic is being detoured due to closure between exits 35 and 45 while better maintaining the flow of traffic on detour routes without the need for flaggers.

PennDOT, PSP and Berks County's public safety agencies plan further for incidents by using and updating detour maps and manuals, holding annual coordination meetings, and installing and maintaining key Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) elements such as cameras, dynamic message signs, highway advisory radios, and emergency sign trailers to aid rapid response. The ITS of Berks County continues to grow as different locations are identified that would benefit

from the installation of this equipment. The RATS ITS Camera Gaps, MPMS Project 120991, plans to add four new cameras to various locations across Berks County. The northern extent of the DVRPC PA 100 and Hanover Street, MPMS Project 82124, will include the addition of two cameras and one dynamic message sign along State Route 100 as it extends approximately one and a quarter mile into Berks County from Montgomery County along this corridor. These projects and investments are an integral part of the state and regional ITS network. Map 39 shows existing and proposed Berks County ITS infrastructure as of the writing of this plan.

PennDOT maintains a traffic management center at PennDOT District 5-0 headquarters in Allentown that provides coordinated regional operations by 24-hour a day monitoring of major state routes in the county and the installed ITS elements. The ITS component of security entails maintaining the control and monitoring capabilities of the transportation infrastructure in the event of crashes, severe weather, natural disasters, terrorist attacks, and other unforeseen events.

The County's ITS system allows PennDOT to share up to the minute data with police, fire, and public works departments of various agencies in the area. PennDOT receives data from the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) from the Berks County 911 center, which provides notifications of incidents without the police having to send updates. This information helps PennDOT respond to incidents more quickly and with the right equipment. These quick response times allow traffic lanes to become unobstructed faster, thus reducing traveler delay and secondary crashes. ITS information is disseminated to the public via a website (www.511pa.com) that shows video images, weather updates, and lane closures caused by incidents and construction.

In March 2019 the Freeway Service Patrol, a program aimed to enhance motorist safety along portions of State Routes 12, 222, and 422 in Berks County, was introduced. This public/private partnership utilizes the existing ITS infrastructure to inform roving tow truck patrol units of incidents occurring on these highways during AM and PM peak traffic hours. The drivers of these patrols are trained to assist police agencies as requested, secure crash scenes, provide first aid, and control traffic. When a vehicle has rendered its driver stranded on the shoulder of the highway, the patrol unit will tow the vehicle and driver to the closest exit. Services included are providing fuel, jump starts, directions, and changing flat tires with no cost to the motorist.

The Berks County Freeway Service Patrol covers 25.1 miles in Zone 1 and 23.6 miles in Zone 2. The response area is an additional 11.2 miles of SR 222 and 4.6 miles of SR 422. Through their added assistance at crash scenes, to clearing disabled vehicles and debris from travel lanes and road shoulders, the Freeway Service Patrol aims to reduce secondary crashes and make these routes safer for motorists in Berks County. The table below shows the number of assists and the number of actions taken broken down annually. Assists refer only to towing abandoned vehicles, checking on drivers, crashes, crashes with injuries, clearing debris, towing disabled vehicles, flooding, assisting pedestrians, assisting police, and managing vehicle fires. Multiple

actions may be taken at each assist site and are not defined as assists, but as actions taken. Actions taken include adding coolant and fuel, marking vehicles as abandoned, recharging batteries, changing tires, waking drivers, and traffic control such as setting flares.

Berks County Freeway Service Patrol Assists						
	2019*	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Zone 1	691	607	546	499	352	383
Zone 2	794	743	537	557	260	287
Berks County Freeway Service Patrol Actions Taken						
Zone 1	1,222	1,001	934	887	615	577
Zone 2	1,359	1,156	962	1,047	478	428

Source: PennDOT District 5 Service Patrol Assists Reports *2019 data is partial (March-December) as this was the inaugural year of the Freeway Service Patrol in Berks County

Other transportation-related security efforts occur at the local level but are primarily mode specific. BARTA has security cameras on its buses that provide a record of any on-board or traffic incidents and serve as a security measure for the vehicles. Local airports have a number of security measures in place, from fencing and lighting to security plans. The Reading Regional Airport complies with guidelines from the Transportation Security Administration for the screening of passengers and freight. Norfolk Southern has a security plan that defines four Alert Levels and three general areas of emphasis: (1) operations (including transportation, engineering, and mechanical); (2) information technology and communications; and (3) railroad police. Norfolk Southern also provides rail incident response training to local police and fire personnel.