



The Allegheny Mountain Realignment Project

The Allegheny Mountain Realignment Project aims to modernize a key section of the Pennsylvania Turnpike in Somerset County, replacing the Allegheny Tunnel, which is deteriorating and is increasingly challenging to maintain, with a new seven-lane road to meet today's mobility and safety standards.

The Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission (PA Turnpike) has been evaluating this project and working with the community for more than 20 years.

After evaluating several options, including rehabilitation of the current tunnel, replacing the tunnel proved to be the safest and most cost-effective solution. The project is now in preliminary engineering and design, with ongoing data collection and public input through 2028.

Why It Matters: This segment has a crash rate roughly three times higher than similar segments statewide due to the constraints of narrow shoulders and limited medians, and its successful completion would reduce long-standing operational constraints, support growing freight demands, and enhance traveler experience.

The Allegheny Mountain Realignment Project reflects a proactive effort to bring aging transportation infrastructure up to 21st-century standards – improving safety, efficiency, and economic connectivity across a critical east-west corridor.

Key Benefits

Enhanced Safety

Reduces crashes, improves incident response times, and enhances safety for motorists, first responders and highway workers by realigning the road and improving its design.

Improved Mobility and Reduced Congestion

Builds a modern alignment, additional travel lanes and a dedicated truck climbing lane to ease congestion caused by capacity limits at the existing tunnel – especially important in high-use and peak travel periods.

Economic and Freight Efficiency

Removes hazardous-material detours onto local roads, reducing community impacts, improving freight mobility and supporting regional commerce.

Long-Term Infrastructure Sustainability

Addresses aging tunnels nearing the end of their useful life by providing a strategic, long-term infrastructure solution that avoids costly, disruptive maintenance and short-term fixes.

Project Background and Decision Process

The Allegheny Realignment Project officially began in 1996 to address aging infrastructure, increasing traffic demand, safety concerns, and restrictions on hazardous materials in local roadways. Over nearly three decades, the PA Turnpike has conducted extensive analysis and public engagement to evaluate all feasible solutions.

This process has included:

- Public meetings in 1999, 2013, and 2020, and 2024.
- Stakeholders and special interest group meetings throughout the timeframe.
- The study-phase review of project alternatives concluded in 2021, and coordination continues with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and other agencies to assess environmental impacts and necessary mitigation. The PA Turnpike remains committed to designing, permitting, and constructing the project in full compliance with all applicable state and federal requirements and permit regulations.
- Detailed Alternatives Analysis phase from 2022–2024, leading to preliminary design.
- All options were thoroughly evaluated over this timeframe, including major rehabilitation of the existing tunnels and construction of a third (new) tunnel. Both were determined to be infeasible.

Why Tunnel Rehabilitation/Expansion is not an Option

- Overall, this approach does not address the safety concerns of the alignment leading to and from the tunnel, hazmat redirection issues or natural slow-down behaviors that lead to congestion.
- Traffic modeling shows the required construction lane closures would create severe and sustained traffic impacts, including backups of more than five miles, with some scenarios extending to 11 miles.
- Requires a significantly longer than typical construction period due to project complexity, geographic constraints and the need to maintain through traffic in the region.
- Construction costs of a rehab/expansion of the current tunnel is approximately double the cost of a roadway re-alignment.

The Environment and Local Communities

The PA Turnpike is committed to protecting the natural environment and preserving the character of the surrounding communities as this project moves forward.

- Environmental studies and design refinements are focused on minimizing impacts to streams, watersheds, and wildlife habitats, while maintaining water quality and supporting long-term ecosystem health.
- Continued coordination with the **US Army Corps of Engineers, US Fish and Wildlife Service, the PA Game Commission, the PA Fish and Boat Commission and the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources** through the PA Natural Diversity Inventory (PNDI) process in the assessment of Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species.
- The project incorporates measures to maintain wildlife movement through the area and reduce disruption to natural corridors.
- As designs are refined, the PA Turnpike continues to evaluate opportunities to further limit environmental impacts and enhance sustainability.

[Click HERE](#) to learn more about the **Allegheny Mountain Realignment Project.**
