

STATEMENT OF POSITION REGARDING ROUTE 23

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation is currently engaged in an Environmental Impact Study of the Route 23 transportation corridor through the Mill Creek Valley. The most recent efforts have PennDOT's Route 23 team looking at possible solutions in the corridor with the goal of reducing construction costs and minimizing environmental impacts. They have defined four options for addressing traffic issues through the Valley:

- No-Build Alternative
- Widening Alternative
- Bareville Connector with Industrial Connector Alternative
- Southern Alternative

Lancaster Farmland Trust a private, non-profit organization that has been partnering with farmers to preserve our farmland since 1988, has been, and continues to be, an active participant in this PENNDOT study.

While acknowledging that the study is ongoing, Lancaster Farmland Trust, which holds easements on over 14,500 acres in Lancaster County, must state its position relative to the existing alternatives at this time. The Board of Trustees believes that the farms and farmland in the Mill Creek Valley are of the utmost importance and must be protected. Therefore, it is the Trust's formal position at this time that the No-Build and Widening Alternatives are the best of those proposed.

Given the fact that new roads create new opportunities for development and will therefore increase congestion, Lancaster Farmland Trust believes that either the No-Build or Widening Alternatives will ultimately be the most effective at reducing congestion. The Bareville and Southern Alternatives create a substantial number and variety of new intersections. PennDOT and its consultants assert that the implementation of County and municipal-level land-use controls will control development at these new interchanges. However, a glance at the Lancaster County Planning Commission's Growth Tracking Report illustrates the frustrating inadequacy of land use controls: despite the implementation of Urban Growth Areas, between 1994 and 2002, 63% of the total land area developed was located outside Growth Areas.

The Mill Creek Valley, which encompasses parts of East Lampeter, Upper Leacock, Leacock, West Earl, Earl, and East Earl Townships, and all of New Holland Borough, is a uniquely special place. The prime Duffield and Hagarstown soils that make up this Valley are some of the best in the nation. The people that farm this ground, the Old Order Amish and Mennonites, have been stewarding these soils for close to 300 years. The area enjoys warm temperatures, a long growing season, and plenty of rain. All of these assets

combine to make this area the most productive non-irrigated farming ground in the United States.

In addition, the farming vistas that are created by the combination of these resources are unmatched. Seven million visitors flock to Lancaster County every year to see our farmers and farmland. The beauty and unique qualities of the Mill Creek Valley are internationally recognized. The area is truly a national treasure.

Lancaster Farmland Trust believes that the Mill Creek Valley is important enough agriculturally, economically, and scenically, to be preserved. Accordingly, we believe that any version of the Bareville Connector or Southern Alternative would be extremely destructive to the area. The No-Build and Widening Alternatives are the only options we can support.

Questions or comments on this statement of position can be forwarded to Karen Martynick, executive director, at (717) 687-8484.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on September 11, 2003