

**Act 1981-35 Performance Audit of the Pennsylvania  
Department of Transportation**

**Report Highlights**

**Key Findings and Recommendations:**

- PENNDOT has undertaken various efforts to reduce highway construction delays, but obtaining necessary permits and environmental clearances is time-consuming. **Recommendation (Rec):** Streamline the environmental clearance process and develop additional ways to provide project status information.
- The 1997 highway maintenance formula results in fairer allocations to counties, and the smoothness of PA roads has improved.
- PENNDOT districts vary in the services they provide to municipalities for “beyond the curb” maintenance. **Rec:** Monitor and adjust new drainage maintenance policy language.
- 39% of PA’s bridges are deficient or obsolete; estimated cost to improve is \$7.3 billion. **Rec:** Amend the law to give PENNDOT greater flexibility to administer the Bridge Program.
- Large truck fatal crash rates have decreased; truck safety inspections have increased. **Rec:** Implement Unified Truck Safety Strategy.
- Work zone fatalities have increased. HB 2410 would impose strict driver work zone penalties.
- PENNDOT’s use of contracted construction managers has raised concerns over conflicts of interest. **Rec:** Develop written guidelines to avoid conflicts of interest.
- PENNDOT’s strict liability provisions regarding business partners’ e-commerce might be overly burdensome. **Rec:** Ensure provisions are appropriate.
- PENNDOT’s policy of allowing only 3 superload permits/day/engineering district may impede economic development. **Rec:** Consider using MCSAP inspectors for superload escorts.
- A check of 70% of driver license records found 30,000 suspicious Social Security numbers. **Rec:** Follow up on possible fraudulent SSNs.
- PENNDOT’s ability to enforce mandatory insurance rules is hindered by the lack of information from insurers. **Rec:** Determine the effectiveness of other states’ matching programs and report to General Assembly.
- On-line messenger service transactions increased to 1.4 million. **Rec:** Make voluntary messenger certification program mandatory.
- PENNDOT’s pilot emissions testing in south-central PA becomes mandatory in mid-2003. **Rec:** Proceed with emissions testing program to avoid federal penalties.
- Alcohol continues to be a key factor in highway fatalities. PA has until 2003 to enact .08 BAC limit to avoid loss of federal highway funds.
- PENNDOT removes motorists’ ARD/DUI after 7 years, but maintains info on the license suspension. **Rec:** General Assembly amend the law to clarify the expungement requirement.
- The lack of standardized accounting for client transportation services impedes sharing of resources. **Rec:** Develop uniform procedures.
- Despite having expanded responsibilities, some districts have cut back on municipal service representatives. **Rec:** Monitor municipal satisfaction with services.
- Only 157 of 768 affected municipalities have enacted mandated airport hazard zoning ordinances. **Rec:** Facilitate adoption of airport hazard zoning ordinances and enforcement.
- PENNDOT is developing initiatives to increase railroad safety awareness. **Rec:** Prioritize railroad-crossing needs and develop legislation to deter railway trespassing.
- PENNDOT has more 1:1 and 1:2 reporting relationships than in 1996; it faces a wave of retirements over the next five years. **Rec:** Work with the Office of Administration to address these and other personnel issues.
- PENNDOT has undertaken an ambitious program of management improvements and performance measurements, including the Baldrige business model. These initiatives have, however, placed significant demands on personnel and resources. **Rec:** Streamline measurement systems to avoid confusion and “data overload.”
- Other findings address: consultant costs; rail freight and aviation grants; purchasing; IT; and highway planning and federal funding.