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## Building the Foundation for FutureLV

The *Lehigh Valley Hazard Mitigation Plan* will help prepare the region for disasters such as floods or hurricanes, while the *Bike/WalkLV* plan works to make the Lehigh Valley more welcoming to cyclists and pedestrians.

And even as an effort to make our communities more accommodating to older residents begins, plans are underway to expand and better connect an already-robust trail network.

Add to that a *Coordinated Transit Human Services Transportation Plan* that's designed to provide better mobility to the region's most vulnerable and an effort to map out \$534 million in road, bridge, transit and trail funding over the next four years, and it becomes apparent that 2018 is a pivotal year in the shaping of the Lehigh Valley's long-term future.

Because ultimately, all of those plans will be used to support *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*. The plan will take pieces from those efforts and stitch them together with data being collected for the past year to weave a seamless mosaic designed to guide the Lehigh Valley for decades to come.

And for the first time in this region, The Regional Plan will include a Long-Range Transportation Plan - to this point updated every four years as a separate plan - mapping out how \$2.5 billion will be spent over the next two decades on roads, bridges, transit and trails.

So, in addition to considering how the Valley will handle automated vehicles and the surge in online shopping-induced freight traffic, The Regional Plan can consider how all those new road projects fit in with the new trail plan in the *Bike/WalkLV*, or how the *Coordinated Transit* plan can complement the transportation network, or how new social and community programs for seniors fits into the picture.

In the end, it will be one big Regional Plan, built on the foundation of several smaller efforts.

"With all of the planning work that's going on, this really is the perfect time for us to be putting together *FutureLV*," said LVPC Executive Director Becky Bradley. "Every one of those efforts will produce something integral to The Regional Plan. Every one of them is going to support us in our mission to improve the quality of life in the Lehigh Valley."

The various 2018 efforts underway that will feed into FutureLV include:

- *The Lehigh Valley Hazard Mitigation Plan* – The LVPC, partnering with Lehigh and Northampton counties, and all 62 municipalities, is working to draft a plan to prepare the region for 25 natural and manmade hazards, including floods, hurricanes, sinkhole and the drug overdose crisis. The plan, an update of the 2013 plan, must be in place by Oct. 10, 2018.
- *Bike/Walk LV* – On the strength of a partnership between the LVPC, PennDOT, the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and a yet-to-be chosen consultant, a plan will work to grow a regional network of more than 300 miles of trails, while making it more connective to existing roads, sidewalks, public transit and neighborhoods. The plan is expected to be completed in 2019.
- *Age-Friendly Communities Effort* – An alliance between the LVPC and the United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley will first seek to have the region designated as an Age-Friendly Community by the AARP, and then work to craft a plan designed to make the region easier to navigate for older residents.
- *Coordinated Transit Human Services Transportation Plan* – Crafted by LVPC and LANTA, the plan identifies gaps in the public transit system’s ability to serve older residents and people with disabilities and shows how human services agencies that are properly funded can fill those gaps. The latest plan, nearly a year in the making, could be adopted as early as this month.
- *Plan to close the D&L Trail gap* – The effort, by LVPC, state agencies, Lehigh and Northampton counties and private entities such as Waterfront Partners, America on Wheels and PPL, looks to close a seven-mile gap in the D&L Trail, stretching from Allentown to Cementon. It is the largest missing link in the 165-mile trail, but closing it may be dependent on a federal Build Grant of up to \$25 million being applied for this summer.

All that adds to other recent works that will be incorporated into FutureLV, including the 2017 Lehigh County *Livable Landscapes* park and open space plan, the 2016 *Livable Landscapes Open Space Plan for Northampton County*, the 2014 *Return on Environment Report*, the 2014 *1LV Report* and the 2015 *MoveLV Regional Freight Plan*.

Then it gets melded with data from LVPC partners, such as Workforce Board Lehigh Valley and Penn State Data Center.

Pennsylvania State Planner Denny Puko said the key to FutureLV will not be how well it uses those other efforts to generate recommendations for municipalities across the region, but how it makes those recommendations happen.

“Comprehensive plans are not a guide,” Puko said Wednesday during a training session at LVPC for municipal leaders and LVPC staff. “They are a plan for action.”

FutureLV will use pieces of each of those efforts, but in the end the mission is the same: A more livable, more inclusive Lehigh Valley that is better prepared for a future that is coming fast.