FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

What is a flex lane?

A flex lane is a paved roadway area which can have a change in use to accommodate travel demand at various times of the day. Examples include part-time shoulder use (as proposed on I-476) or operating reversable lanes (like on I-279 in Pittsburgh). On I-476 the inside shoulders will be widened to allow for part-time use as travel lanes to provide extra traffic capacity during peak travel times or as needed during incidents.

Why is the Department looking to add a flex lane to I-476 from Route 3 (West Chester Pike) to MacDade Boulevard?

This section of I-476 is congested for over 6 hours on a typical weekday as well as holiday weekends. The purpose of the flex lane is to provide improved travel time reliability by accommodating peak travel demand volumes and reducing congestion.

Can the Department describe how the flex lanes will be added?

The flex lanes will be added by widening the roadway into the existing median. In most of the project area there is currently a 4-foot paved inside shoulder adjacent to a barrier or guiderail. The inside shoulder will be expanded on both the northbound and southbound sides of the highway to a width of 13.5.' This inside shoulder will be used as a flex lane during peak periods and other times when the roadway is congested or during incident response.

Is there enough room for flex lanes in the current median?

Between Route 1 and Baltimore Pike there is ample room to accommodate the flex lane in the median with minimal alterations. From Route 3 to Route 1 and from Baltimore Pike to MacDade Boulevard significant alterations of I-476 bridges and a few retaining walls will have to be constructed to accommodate the flex lanes.

What will happen to the existing outside shoulders?

The existing outside (right side) shoulders will not be impacted by this project. The outside shoulders will remain as is for uses including vehicle breakdowns, emergency response, stormwater runoff, and snow removal.

Will the current interchanges at Route 3 (West Chester Pike), Route 1, Baltimore Pike and MacDade Boulevard be impacted by this project?

No, these four interchanges in the project area will continue to function as-is in their current configurations.

The ramp from I-476 south to I-95 south narrows to one lane, won't that be a bottleneck? What about congestion on I-95 southbound through the City of Chester?

As part of this project, the outside shoulder of I-95 southbound from I-476 to the Commodore Barry Bridge Interchange will also be improved and converted to a flex lane. This is necessary to relieve congestion on I-95 southbound in the City of Chester.

Will the addition of flex lanes include a study of the impacts of noise throughout the project corridor?

Yes, a complete noise study of the project corridor on I-476 from Route 3 to I-95 and on I-95 from I-476 to Engle Street is underway.

Will the addition of flex lanes require acquisition of right-of-way (ROW)?

Because the flex lanes are being constructed in the median of I-476, significant amounts of ROW are not required. However, acquisition of ROW acquisition will be needed, at some locations to accommodate stormwater management improvements that will be necessary due to the increased amount of pavement in the project corridor from the addition of the flex lanes.

How will use of the flex lanes be controlled? How will motorists know if they are open or closed?

Much like the Delaware River Port Authority's bridges (Walt Whitman, Commodore Barry, etc.) lane control devices, red Xs or green arrows will be displayed at intervals on gantries over the roadway to show which lanes are open or closed. The red Xs or green arrows will be updated dynamically as traffic volumes, weather conditions, incidents, or vehicle breakdowns warrant that lanes be opened or closed throughout the day.

When the flex lane is "closed," what will prevent motorists from using it?

Much like normal roadway shoulders, unlawful use of the flex lanes (when closed) and other traffic regulations will be enforced by the Pennsylvania State Police.