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## Letterkenny Army Depot's front gate to be improved

By JIM HOOK Senior writer

Projects that will ease truck access to Letterkenny Army Depot are moving onto the drawing board:

- The Department of the Army agreed on Friday to accept 2.5 acres from the Franklin County Area Development Corp. for a new main gate.
- Greene Township supervisors are proceeding with plans to install traffic signals and turn lanes at U.S. 11 and Pa. 997. The \$2.4 million project will allow trucks to make the turn more easily.

A new gate, north of the former Gate 6 on Pa. 997, will make a more secure entrance to the industrial shops at Letterkenny, according to L. Michael Ross, chairman of Team Letterkenny.

Team Letterkenny is dedicated to strengthening Letterkenny, the largest employer in Franklin County. With the Pentagon talking about cutting costs, another base closure round is in the rumor mill. Letterkenny has had mixed results with the Base Realignment and Closure Commission.

"(A new gate) will greatly reduce the congestion that occurs at the current main gate," Letterkenny Chief of Staff Mark Sheffield said. "It will be much safer to our employees and the general public. Our goal is to get all the tractor and trailers into a lot that is designed specifically for that. It will also take the majority of the heavy traffic away from the industrial area."

FADC purchased the 2.5 acres from the Mummert family for \$332,000 and will give it to the Army, Ross said. FADC spent another \$50,000 on a transportation study, engineering and the land subdivision.

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The gate is part of Letterkenny's master plan to move all operations behind the main fence.

Sheffield said Letterkenny will use its own money to build the gate.

U.S. Rep. Bill Shuster, R-Hollidaysburg, has indicated that as much as \$2.8 million from the U.S. Surface Transportation Act can be allocated to the U.S. 11/Pa. 997 project, according to township officials. The federal money requires a local match of 20 percent. Potential local sources include Sheetz (\$440,000), current township transportation impact fees (\$72,000) and future impact fees (\$150,000).

"It's an excellent use of those funds and will enhance economic development at the intersection," said Ross, also president of the Franklin County Area Development Corp.

The township has advertised for a consultant to begin the design, according to township engineer Greg Lambert. The township will coordinate the project, then own and maintain the signals.

The project will help move traffic through the Greenvillage intersection serving the Army depot, Cumberland Valley Business Park and a larger Sheetz store coming soon to the southwest quadrant of the intersection. Service from Interstate 81 to Letterkenny and the business park is "diminished" because of poor turning at the intersection, according to township officials. Traffic signals are outmoded and the turning lanes are insufficient. Trucks bound for Letterkenny on Pa. 997 from I-81 cannot travel straight across the intersection. Trucks are prohibited from using the narrow road through Culbertson. The trucks must turn south onto U.S. 11, then west onto Pa. 433 to Letterkenny. The U.S. 11/Pa. 433 intersection was improved recently with a signal and additional turn lane. Ross said the improvements at Greenvillage will allow trucks to make the turn more easily.

No target dates have been set for construction or completion. They should appear in Franklin County's transportation improvement plan due in October.

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Jim Hook can be reached at 262-4759 and [jhook@publicopinionnews.com](mailto:jhook@publicopinionnews.com).



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