

PSATS News Bulletin

A NEWSLETTER
CONTAINING
THE LATEST
INFORMATION
ON LEGISLATION
AND NEWS OF
INTEREST TO
TOWNSHIPS

**Township residents
without broadband
service may now
complete an
important survey by
phone or mail to let
the PA Broadband
Development
Authority know that
access is needed.**

Broadband Survey Available By Phone, Mail

Township officials and residents who lack broadband access or have slow service now have options for completing a critical survey to register their need for broadband access. The Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority will use survey results to help determine where to provide new or improved broadband service with the more than \$1 billion in dedicated federal funds. Everyone is encouraged to complete the [anonymous survey](#) as soon as possible by going to dced.pa.gov and choosing “Programs & Funding” and then “Broadband in Pennsylvania” (look under “Broadband” for “Digital Access Survey”), calling (570) 865-8185, or copying the [printable version](#) (call PBDA at 1-866-466-3972 or call PSATS at 717-763-0930 if you need a copy sent to you) and mailing it to Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority, Commonwealth Keystone Building, 400 North Street, 4th Floor, Harrisburg, PA 17120-0225.

Residents, businesses, and organizations throughout Pennsylvania are encouraged to **complete the survey before October**. The survey asks about access to broadband internet services, how much those services cost, whether it is a burden on the resident, and if the resident has the devices needed to access the internet. Township officials should complete the survey, which takes about 10-15 minutes, and encourage their residents to complete it as well, particularly if broadband access is needed.

Provide Input on Broadband Grant Applications

Townships may now weigh in on applications for federal broadband funds in their community. The Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority and townships now have an opportunity to weigh in on applications for projects in their community.

Maps providing the generalized outline of project areas for grant submissions are available at dced.pa.gov, by choosing “Programs & Funding” and then “Broadband in Pennsylvania” (look under “Federal and State” for “BIP: PA Broadband Service Availability Map” or “Local Government Feedback” to provide feedback). To look at application details, left-click in the project outline. Viewers can toggle between proposals in the project information box.

To participate, appoint a point of contact for your township and email Kalie Snyder, PBDA Outreach Manager, at kalsnyder@pa.gov. Put “Local Government POC” in the subject line and note the individual’s name (*who can be a township official or consultant*), their contact information, including email, and the name of the township and county. The contact will be given a secure, password-protected link to provide input.

Participation is optional. Townships may provide subjective input on a project based on its experience or that of its residents. To avoid duplication, townships may challenge a proposed project if high-speed broadband service is available now or an approved project is or will be underway. Townships that choose to participate should either input or a challenge for projects in their jurisdiction. **Townships have until October 6 to provide feedback.**



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PSATS argues that stormwater management fees on developed property are fees (and authorized in the Township Code), and not taxes, and are therefore appropriate, and the Supreme Court should overturn the Commonwealth Court's decision.

Capitol Roundup

Governor Signs 2023-2024 State Budget — After a month impasse, the state Senate convened on August 4 to sign the [2023-2024 budget bill](#) and forward it to the governor, [who promptly signed it](#) into law, allowing pre-existing state program funding, including education and human services, to be released. However, [new programs](#) cannot receive funding until legislation is enacted to create them. The Senate met in August and passed HB 1300, which would implement state funding and create new programs. Highlights for townships include increasing the payment-in-lieu-of taxes for state-owned forest reserves to \$2.40/acre and adjusting ambulance transportation rates to include all loaded miles and reimburse at the greater of Medicare or Medicaid rates.

The Senate is scheduled to return September 18 while the state House is not scheduled to return until September 26. It is unclear if the House will take up the Senate legislation.

PSATS will report on new programs affecting townships once legislation is enacted to create them. Of interest, several state agencies, including the state Departments of Community and Economic Development, Environmental Protection, received an increase in their general government operations funding. At DCED, the Center for Local Government Services saw its funding increase by 7%, while the [Municipal Assistance Program](#), which provides grants to local governments for shared services and community planning, increased by \$1.45 million.

PSATS Submits Comments on Broadband Report — PSATS recently submitted comments to the Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority on its draft Broadband Equity, Access, and Development Program report, which is required for federal funding. PSATS primary concern is ensuring that the funds go to providing, first and foremost, broadband service for unserved communities and their residents. The Authority conducted an online survey on broadband access and PSATS questioned why alternative means weren't provided for completing the survey for those without access (*note: see page 1 for phone and mail option*). In addition, PSATS took issue with the report's concerns over the complexity of the local permit processes for broadband and its call for a statewide permitting standard. For more, go to [psats.org](#) and choose "Legislative & Policy" and then "Letters to Agencies."

PSATS Calls Out Commonwealth on Stormwater Double Standard — PSATS and other state municipal associations filed an amicus brief in *Borough of West Chester v. Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education*, No. 9 MAP 2023, asking the Pennsylvania Supreme Court to reverse the Commonwealth Court's decision that the stormwater management fee imposed by the Borough of West Chester on property owners based on the amount of impervious surface is a "tax." Exempting state property from paying their share of stormwater management fees places an undue burden on other residents and defeats the purpose of the programs.

This case arose after West Chester University and the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PSSHE) refused to pay the borough's fee, claiming to be exempt from local taxation as commonwealth entities. PSATS argues that stormwater management fees on developed property are fees (*and authorized in the Township Code*), and not taxes, and are therefore appropriate, and the Supreme Court should overturn the Commonwealth Court's decision. For the press release, go to [psats.org](#) and choose "Newsroom" and then "News Releases & Op-Eds."

OOR Now Requiring Use of E-File Appeal Portal — The Office of Open Record's announced that all OOR appeals will now be conducted through the E-File Portal. Access will be granted following receipt of the appeal once an OOR Appeals Officer has been assigned.

The 2024 PSATS Conference is only \$199 per person and includes access to three-and-a-half days of education, networking, and the largest municipal exhibit show in Pennsylvania!

New users will receive login credentials and current users will receive an email to check the E-File Portal for new documents. To learn more, go to openrecords.pa.gov.

The OOR is also conducting free onling training on the Sunshine Act and Right-to-Know Law. For dates and times, go to openrecords.pa.gov.

Save the Date, Budget for PSATS Conference

With budget season underway, now is the time to think about funding a line item for PSATS' 2024 Annual Educational Conference & Exhibit Show, scheduled for **April 14-17 in Hershey**. Don't miss this opportunity to network with your peers from across the state, meet with the exhibitors, go to workshops, take care of business, hear from top state and federal officials, and just enjoy gathering with friends once again.

The PSATS Conference is only \$199 per person and includes access to three-and-a-half days of education, networking, and the largest municipal exhibit show in Pennsylvania. Nowhere else can you find so much value packed into a few days!

Eligible attendees include township supervisors, secretaries, treasurers, managers, emergency management coordinators, public works employees, code and zoning officers, solicitors, engineers, planners, other employees, and guests. The Township Code authorizes townships to reimburse attendees for their registration fee, mileage, and other expenses.

We hope you include a line item in your 2024 budget for the PSATS Annual Conference! It's an investment you won't regret.

Conference Workshop Topics

Have suggestions for workshop topics for the 2024 Conference? Email Scott Coburn, PSATS Director of Education, at scoburn@psats.org.

PSATS Announces New High School Scholarship

What can township officials do to help high schoolers appreciate the importance of local government? We can offer them a chance to earn a scholarship to help pay for post high school learning, whether they be 2- or 4-year college degree programs, or technical training schools and certificate programs that lead to professions.

Townships can help foster a better connection between the township and its schools, while helping inspire the next generation of local leaders by promoting the brand-new PSATS Scholarship Program. Four \$1,500 scholarships are available to high school juniors and seniors: two Local Government Achievement scholarships and two Academic Achievement scholarships.

The Local Government Achievement scholarship is an opportunity for students to highlight outstanding citizenship through public service and community involvement. The Academic Achievement scholarship will be awarded to students who exhibit enthusiasm toward education and local government.

Let's help inspire these high school students to apply for the new PSATS scholarships. Applications are due **January 26, 2024**. Scholarship and application information can be found below, or at www.psats.org/scholarship.

Don't Miss PSATS Training Opportunities!

Don't miss these in-person training options! Go to [learn.psats.org](https://www.learn.psats.org) for details and to register.

- **PSATS' Regional Forums are back!** This series of full-day educational sessions is scheduled for multiple locations statewide. Join us for the **Southcentral event in Lancaster on September 13**, the **Southeast event in Plymouth Meeting on September 18**, the **Northeast event in Tannersville on September 27**, and the **Centre event in State College on October 3**. Learn more about issues that matter to your community, discuss common interests with other local leaders, earn PMGA and other professional credits, and attend specialized workshops designed for township officials. This educational event will be the perfect opportunity to hear from experts on the local issues that matter to you and your municipality.
- **Developing Your Township Budget** will be held **virtually on September 12**. This class will provide proven and effective methods and techniques to help new and veteran township supervisors, secretaries, treasurers, managers, roadmasters, and public works officials develop effective budgets.
- **QuickBooks Training:** Check out **Budgets with QuickBooks on September 12** in Lehigh County or virtually on **September 28**. **Quickbooks and the Municipal Chart of Accounts** will be held in Lehigh County on **September 12** and virtually on **October 25**.

This and That...

Be sure to check this section each month, where you will find important reminders and information.

- **PSATS Cyber Insurance Program Now Available:** Everyone has read the headlines or seen the news about various cyberattacks. Of note, 53.2% of attacks in state government are targeted toward municipalities and local schools across the nation. Partnering with Gunn-Mowery Insurance Agency, PSATS is now offering PSATS Cyber Advantage to Pennsylvania's townships to protect themselves against attacks, as well as deal with the consequences of an attack, including insurance offerings. Check out the enclosure or go to [psats.org](https://www.psats.org) to learn more today!
- **See Your Township in the 2024 PSATS Calendar!** PSATS wants photos of township historical assets for its 2024 calendar. From historic buildings to covered bridges to battlefields, townships are home to many significant sites that help form the legacy of the commonwealth in U.S. history. Photos taken with a smartphone are fine, but send them as "actual size" to ensure best resolution. Photos should be in color. Email photos as jpeg attachments to bwilt@psats.org by **September 15**. Provide your name, position, township, county, and daytime telephone number.
- **Give Your Township Access to 2023 Salary Survey Results!** Results from the 2023 PSATS Salary Survey Plus are expected to be released the first week of September. Please join the hundreds of townships that have participated to date and enter your data today. **Please note that ONLY participating townships will receive access to results**, including statewide results of township employee wages and benefits and the ability to compare these results by budget size, population, union status, county, and more, as well as generate personalized reports and graphs.
To access Salary Survey Plus, log onto [psats.org](https://www.psats.org) and look under "My PSATS" for "Salary Survey Plus." If you have any issues accessing the survey or need to change the township official designated to enter data (*the PSATS Salary Survey Plus processor*), email memberservices@psats.org. Email salariesurveyplus@psats.org with questions.
- **Newly Revised Federal Form I-9 Now in Effect:** The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration services has published a new version of [Form I-9, Employment Eligibility Verification](https://www.uscis.gov/i-9), which is now in effect. The new form is condensed and is a fillable form and reduces instructions. The new form provides options for certain employers to remotely examine accompanying identity documents for their employees. Townships must use the new form for all new employees and elected officials. As in the past, retain completed I-9 forms for all new hires. To learn more and access the form, go to www.uscis.gov/i-9.
- **PA Safety Day Slated for State College:** PA Safety Day is sponsored by Pennsylvania 811 and will be held in-person at the [Nittany Valley Sports Centre in State College on September 14](https://www.nittanyvalley.com). Don't miss this sessions designed to teach attendees about safe digging practices, which are valuable for public works employees. Go to [pa1call.org](https://www.pa1call.org) to learn more and register.