

# Part II

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# External Influences

## Introduction

In many ways, events and decisions external to Monroe County will influence both the development pressures and the development pattern for Monroe 2020. Following are the most important prospective influences, and these are graphically shown on the accompanying Regional Influences map.

## Import of the Metropolitan Region

Monroe County's trends of population and economic growth are, in Pennsylvania, comparable only with the suburban Philadelphia counties of Chester, Bucks, and Montgomery. Two features distinguish these trends: an increasing number of county residents are commuters to a Metro core and employment centers along the way. An increasing number of jobs within the County represent a spread of Metro region economic activities to accessible places with talented residents, at lesser cost than places closer to the core. These twin features of population and job growth in attractive, accessible settings mark Monroe and differentiate it from other Counties in northeast Pennsylvania.



The Metro region that generates these opportunities, and pressures, is New York-New Jersey, and Monroe County is fast becoming its western bastion. A January 1999 edition of *Pocono Real Estate Guide* boldly displays a cover ad for "The Top Commuter Neighborhoods for 1999," features a map showing a direct route on I-80 between the Delaware Water Gap Bridge and the George Washington Bridge, and offers house prices well below similar space in New Jersey suburbs. A mid-1990s economic study (Wadley-Donovan) for Northeast Pennsylvania singled out Monroe County as a particularly desirable location for back office jobs. Prospects for population and job growth in the larger New York-New Jersey region will help shape corresponding growth in Monroe County.

## Northwest New Jersey-Northeast Pennsylvania Rail Project

Passenger rail service between Monroe County and the New Jersey employment centers, as well as New York City and Scranton, will be re-instituted. It will occur through a \$160 million project utilizing existing right-of way, and authorized by the 1998 Transportation Equity Act (TEA-21). The Monroe County Railroad Authority (MCRA) is a major player in the effort which has received widespread endorsement, including support from the Sierra Club, as the most effective

relief to traffic congestion in the I-80 corridor. As portrayed in the news release announcing federal authorization:

The bi-state project will offer an alternative to highway travel in the very busy and heavily congested I-80 and I-380 corridor by using the existing railroad right-of-way. Inclusion in the federal authorization legislation is a major milestone in advancing the project. The large number of residents in northeast Pennsylvania and northwest New Jersey who commute to jobs in or near Morris County, NJ places a heavy burden on the existing highway network. Slow moving, bumper to bumper traffic congestion worsens each year, especially on I-80. The high cost of projects to increase highway capacity, along with the impact on our environment and quality of life as well as the impacts of the federal Clean Air Act, make major highway expansions very difficult if not impossible.

Passenger rail service will support the continued growth of residents and jobs in Monroe County. Planning for precise station locations and surrounding land use will provide MCRA and the County with a powerful tool to direct that growth.

### ***Connecting Route 33 to I-78***

PennDOT's connection of Route 33 in Northampton County directly to I-78 near Bethlehem is one highway undertaking that will link Monroe County even more directly to fast growing sections of the Metro Region. The connection, to be made after the year 2000, will afford a bypass of Easton and make Hunterdon County, the fastest growing employment area in western New Jersey, readily accessible to Monroe County commuters, particularly from the West End.

### ***New Jersey International Trade Center Expansion***

One major outpost of Metro region employment is the International Trade Center at Mount Olive at the western edge of Morris County, about one half hour from the Water Gap via I-80. Including a Free Trade Zone for processing materials from overseas among its amenities, only 3.3 of ITC's planned 7.0 million square feet has been developed. Potential ultimate employment is over 20,000. ITC considers Monroe County in its commuting shed and may be a station stop along the rail line to New York.

### ***Proposed Performing Arts Center at Unity House***

Recent announcement that the Pittsburgh Symphony may make Pike County's Unity House its summer home gave indication that the long-desired performing arts center for the Poconos may indeed be established. A world-class orchestra tapping both the summer visitor and the New York and Philadelphia markets can be the catalyst for still other performance companies to use the property and for East Stroudsburg University's proposed on-premises culinary school. Seating arrangements for audiences up to 19,000 are planned. While the Center is being promoted as a second Tanglewood, its attractions will bring world-class traffic through Monroe County as well. Route 209 is the only primary access, and reaching 209 from the major markets primarily means use of interchanges along Route 80. Audiences for the proposed Arts Center will share the roads with the more than four million annual visitors to the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. That means even greater potential strain on the area's arterial road network especially the Marshalls Creek Bypass which was planned prior to a northern traffic generator of such impact being proposed.

**REGIONAL  
INFLUENCES**  
MONROE COUNTY,  
PENNSYLVANIA

**LEGEND**

-  Urbanized Area
-  State Boundaries
-  County Boundaries
-  Interstate Highways
-  State, Freight & Passenger Rail Service

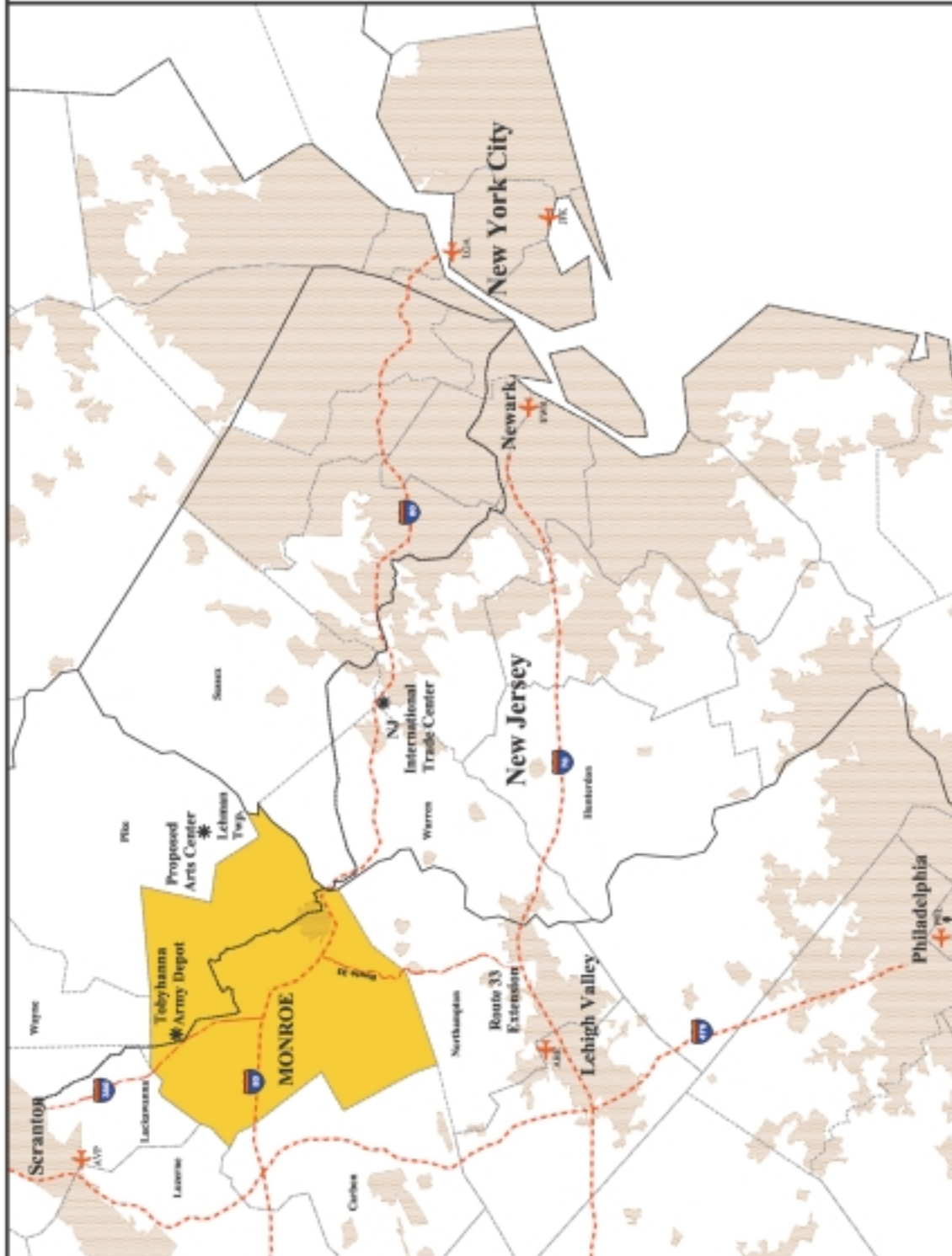


[www.monroe2020.org](http://www.monroe2020.org)

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### ***Population Growth in Lehman Township, Pike County***

Pike County, far less populous than Monroe, is nonetheless the fastest growing in Pennsylvania. Lehman Township at its southern border is part of the East Stroudsburg School District. It is generating school needs and demand for school construction in its portion of the School District, the financial and administrative implications of which are being felt in Monroe County.

### ***Freight Rail Linkages to the North and West***

Buoyed by the authorization to re-institute passenger service and by the completion of the Amber Milling plant at Pocono Summit, the Monroe County Railroad Authority is once again looking to position Monroe County as a freight rail/highway distribution center. Amber Milling's receipt of grain by rail from the west, processing the grain to flour in Monroe County, and then shipping the finished product by truck to consumer markets throughout the Northeast is the model. MCRA put the challenge and the opportunity this way:

- The next logical question to ask ourselves is do we, in Monroe County, really want to develop as a key processing and distribution center for the Northeast corridor? We know we possess a strategic location for the fulcrum. We already have in place rail and highway spokes to serve at least the Northern two-thirds of the entire Northeast corridor. But we lack the rail-served facilities to house a whole series of industry fulcrums . . .
- It is essential to have access to one rail trunk line. It is ideal to have access to two. At the Scranton gateway, Monroe County rail shippers . . . have direct access to two rail trunk lines . . . This access to two competing trunk line carriers through Scranton is a big plus for Monroe County. Only a bare handful of points serving as fulcrums for the Northeast corridor offer this. Could it be the reason why Amber Milling has chosen the Pocono Summit site?<sup>6</sup>

MCRA officials are currently working with the Planning Department and its GIS to identify suitable industrial or distribution sites with direct rail access. The county's recent purchase in the Coolbaugh-Mt. Pocono area of the Senda property and negotiations on the Tegawitha property could add close to 800 acres of economic development land that can be serviced both by rail and by the interstate highway system, positioning Monroe County even more effectively to take advantage of its location in the Northeast.

### ***National Defense Policy and the Tobyhanna Army Depot***

Monroe's single largest employer is the Tobyhanna Army Depot at the County's far northwest edge, in close proximity to the new industrial/distribution sites of Senda and Tegawitha. Tobyhanna is the largest communications-electronics maintenance facility in the Department of Defense and undertakes repair, overhaul, modification, conversion, testing and maintenance planning for a host of military electronic systems. The Depot employs a highly skilled workforce of 3,600, about 600 of whom are Monroe County residents. Tobyhanna has survived the most recent round of base cuts and has absorbed activity from other facilities not so fortunate. Present prospects seem favorable, but the Depot is nonetheless vulnerable to shifts in base operating policies from Washington.

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<sup>6</sup> *Monroe County Railroad Authority, A Plan for the Economic Renaissance of Monroe County, undated, pp. 20-23.*

### ***Potential PennDOT Initiatives***

PennDOT is currently preparing the next phase of its state-wide transportation plan which will focus on recommending a range of multi-modal improvements (highway, rail, bikeway, airport, etc.) for specific transportation corridors of state-wide importance. Two of those corridors intersect in Monroe County: an east-west route focusing on I-80, and a north-south route encompassing the Northeast Extension of the Turnpike (I-476) but extending as far east as I-380 and the rail line. PennDOT is also concerned with enhancing the design quality of arterial roadways under its jurisdiction and their adjoining land uses. Support from PennDOT in enabling the County to undertake long-range, systematic transportation planning and in clearing the visual blight of several roadway segments is crucial. County officials have already initiated a dialogue with PennDOT to seek such support, based especially on Monroe County's rapid growth and significance to the Pennsylvania economy.

### ***Potential Initiatives from the Commonwealth Legislature***

Monroe County is one of the few counties in Pennsylvania experiencing rapid growth in population and economic activity. Many municipalities within the County share these pressures. The need for intermunicipal agreements on planning, joint zoning, transfer of development rights, provision of services, signage control and a host of other matters is extremely apparent. So is the need to establish new growth management tools such as impact fees. Some progress can be made within the constraints of the current Municipalities Planning Code. However, significant changes in state enabling legislation are required. Monroe legislators have joined others from rapidly growing jurisdictions (mainly the suburban Philadelphia counties of Bucks, Chester, and Montgomery) to press for major reforms. Several relevant bills are being reviewed, and the Monroe 2020 task forces have made representations of their support to the legislature and to the Governor's 21st Century Environment Commission.

### ***Discretionary Income and Tastes for Leisure Time in the Northeast***

Monroe County has the third largest tourist economy in Pennsylvania, behind only Philadelphia and Allegheny Counties, along with the third largest labor force in tourist-related employment. Total tourist expenditures in Monroe are three to seven times higher than those in each of the other Pocono counties of Pike, Wayne, and Carbon. Even while year-round residential population increases, along with retail, industrial, and government employment, tourism will and must be maintained as a major component of Monroe's economic base. The New York and Philadelphia regions are the principal sources of visitors to the County's attractions, and of owners of second homes. Economic stability and growth in these two metropolises, and the response of their populations to the character of tourism in the Poconos, will shape the tourism industry's success.