On September 14, 2017, PUC Judge David Salapa held the Further Prehearing Conference which had been continued for a year to allow PennDOT and the parties to address the issues of concern and, perhaps, arrive at consensus. On July 1, 2017, PennDOT had placed a notice in the PA Bulletin that Bicycle Pa Route J was being moved to US 11/15 from SR 322/22. Bicyclists will be allowed to use the US 11/15 freeway bypassing Duncannon. PennDOT's attorney, however, advised the Judge that they had not yet done any improvements to US 11/15 in order to move Route J. Signs were ordered to inform motorists and bicyclists that bicyclists are authorized to use the Duncannon Bypass (US15). The conversation with Judge Salapa led PennDOT’s attorney to state that the move will be completed by the end of this calendar year.

The only attorney who was representing bicyclists (LVBC) was our member Harry Fenton who has provided his time pro bono. His concern from the start was that PennDOT has the authority to ban bicyclists from freeways and we have all agreed that SR 322/22 meets the definition of a freeway. Judge Salapa holds the same opinion. When the reconstructed Dauphin Narrows was completed, PennDOT’s Deputy Secretary had allowed bicyclists the use of SR 322/22. However, now, PennDOT won’t certify that the Dauphin RR underpass is safe for bicyclists to use. Will PennDOT ignore the need for access and ban bicyclists in 2018? (The ban was activated. At least one bicyclist has been stopped by a State Trooper during his commute home from work.)

Actually, the Judge admitted that he is unsure what the PUC staff expected by bringing this case for adjudication. We concur with the Judge’s bafflement. The PUC attorney accepted PennDOT’s decision to move Route J as the solution. The PUC engineers who initiated the investigation and consequent hearing did not attend. This is frustrating. The Judge will prepare his position for the PUC Commissioners. LVBC Member Ed Krebs and Judge Salapa conversed after the Pre-Hearing about the situation.

The next day, the KSK - JMT staff met with bicyclists’ advocates, District 8 staff, Bike Ped Coordinator Roy Gothie and Middle Paxton Township supervisors and manager, to provide their initial findings for possible solutions for bicyclists’ access through the Dauphin Narrows. Ed represented LVBC. At the start of this meeting, Bill Hoffman noted that the key issue is about bicyclists’ access and not the relocation of Route J. Ramps and bridges across the railroad property are concepts proposed for northbound. The proposal to use River Road to bypass the underpass southbound was fleshed out, but there has been no contact with the land owner nor the Homeowners Association that maintains the road. This would not resolve northbound.

We, LVBC and others, have been of the opinion that biking north through the underpass is acceptable, as is, because motorists have considerable visibility prior to reaching the underpass, and it requires a few seconds to pass through by bike. Bicyclists immediately exit the highway. Very visible signage that shows bicyclists’ presence should be installed which we have repeatedly recommended. Another concept offered by KSK/JMT is to construct a cantilever bridge between the River Road private property site south to connect to SR 443. This would allow for both south and north bound travel by pedestrians and bicyclists. KSK/JMT will be submitting a final summary report which will include “refinement of design alternatives” and “preliminary cost estimates for design alternatives”. LVBC has explained that there is a significant difference between touring cyclists who would not be aware of the present underpass conditions and local cyclists who know the circumstances and adjust their cycling through the underpass accordingly. We don't want bicyclists banned for the time that will be required to fund and construct an off road alternative.