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**Wolf Administration’s “Innovations Challenge” Invites Students to Develop Technologies, Solutions to Combat Roadway Litter**

**Harrisburg, PA** –The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) announced today that students in grades 9-12 are invited to participate in the third PennDOT Innovations Challenge which encourages students to use their problem-solving, creative and strategic-thinking abilities to solve real-world transportation challenges in a competition among their peers.

This year’s Innovations Challenge asks students to look at cost-effective technologies and innovative solutions - aside from laws, programs and educational campaigns - that can be developed in the next five to 10 years to help PennDOT more efficiently, effectively and safely control litter along roadways.

Last year, PennDOT spent nearly $13 million cleaning up roadside litter across Pennsylvania.  In addition, nearly 5,000 volunteers spend countless hours participating in the Adopt-A-Highway program each year. These dollars and volunteer hours could have otherwise been spent on delivering a better transportation network and making Pennsylvania a better state in which to live.

“While we are grateful for the selfless actions of our thousands of Adopt-A-Highway volunteers, we continue to look for ways to curb the amount of roadside litter across Pennsylvania,” said PennDOT Secretary Leslie S. Richards. “Through the PennDOT Innovations Challenge, students can develop a long-term, sustainable solution to address this ongoing challenge, and make Pennsylvania a cleaner and more beautiful place to live.”

“In addition to a public health hazard and eyesore, the litter along Pennsylvania’s roads is an environmental problem, degrading soil, water, and wildlife,” said DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell.  “DEP is excited to support this opportunity to have young innovators bring fresh solutions to this longtime problem for the benefit of current and future generations of Pennsylvania.”

The Innovations Challenge aims to not only help students explore real transportation challenges that PennDOT is facing, but also open their minds to the very real possibility of working for PennDOT after graduation.

“Engineering and equipment operator positions are key to building and maintaining Pennsylvania’s vast road and bridge network,” Richards added. “However, PennDOT employs more than 11,000 Pennsylvanians from a wide array of educational backgrounds in nearly 400 job classifications."

Regional Innovations Challenge winners will be selected and invited to compete in Harrisburg for the state championship. This year, the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA) and the Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful (KPB) organization are providing a combined total award of $3,000 to be divided among the first, second and third place statewide winning teams.

For complete Innovations Challenge details, visit [www.penndot.gov/innovation](http://www.penndot.gov/innovation). The deadline for submissions is December 20, 2019.

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