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Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful and PA Turnpike Commission Celebrate Success in Reducing Cigarette Litter at 17 Service Plazas

(December 17, 2024) Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful partnered with the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission to implement the Cigarette Litter Prevention Program (CLPP) at 17 service plazas across the state with a \$20,000 grant received from Keep America Beautiful.



The program began with a scan, or physical count, of cigarette butts and other tobacco related products littering each service plaza. Seventy ash receptacles were installed at the entrances to buildings and other transition points. Two additional scans were performed, with a final reduction rate of 43% after implementing the program for 8 months. Educational messaging about the consequences of cigarette and other tobacco related litter was displayed at the participating service plazas.

“We are thankful for our partnership with Keep PA Beautiful and eager to see the results that are already occurring at our service plazas along the Pennsylvania Turnpike,” said Keith Jack, Director of Facilities Operations and co-chair of the Turnpike’s Sustainability Committee. “We look forward to continuing to raise awareness of the environmental impact

from cigarette butt litter through educating the 550,000 daily users across our system. We will continue to help others understand their individual responsibility for proper waste disposal, including properly disposing of their cigarette butts, and the impact that can have on their community.”

The program partners with TerraCycle to recycle collected cigarette butts, turning waste into reusable materials. The filters are melted into hard plastic that can be remolded to make new recycled industrial products, such as plastic pallets. The residual tobacco and paper are separated out and composted in a specialized process.

“Providing ash receptacles and educating the public are effective strategies to combat the most common type of litter. We are proud to collaborate with the PA Turnpike Commission to reduce cigarette butts and tobacco product litter by 43% at these 17 service plazas. The program significantly reduces the amount of cigarette litter in public spaces, increases awareness of proper disposal and improves disposal habits. These efforts help save costs associated with maintenance of public areas,” said Shannon Reiter, President, Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful.

According to Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful's 2019 Pennsylvania Litter Research Study, over 500 million pieces of litter were found on Pennsylvania's roadways. Of the total estimated litter, 186.2 million or 37.1 percent were cigarette butts.

Cigarette butts that are thrown on the ground can contaminate soil and ground water with chemicals and heavy metals; fatally impact birds, animals and marine life who often mistake them for food; and the filters, made of cellulose acetate, never fully disappear from the environment.

To find out more about the [Cigarette Litter Prevention Program](#), visit keepbeautiful.org and choose Programs, then Cigarette Litter Prevention Program or contact Michelle Dunn, Program Coordinator, Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful at mdunn@keepbeautiful.org.

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About Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful

Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful's vision is a clean and beautiful Pennsylvania. Since 1990, Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful has worked with hundreds of thousands of volunteers across the state to pick up nearly 158 million pounds of trash from Pennsylvania's roadways, waterways, greenways, vacant lots, forestlands and other community spaces. Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful's core programming focuses on litter and illegal dump prevention, cleanup, community greening, and proper waste handling and sustainable practices. Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful works with many partnering organizations on the state and grassroots level to accomplish our goal of a clean and beautiful Pennsylvania. Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful is the state affiliate of Keep America Beautiful, Inc., the nation's largest volunteer-based community action and education organization. To learn more about Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful, visit www.keepbeautiful.org.

About the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission:

Protecting the environment through sustainability has been a guiding principle within the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission (PTC) for more than three decades. The first state agency to achieve this score, the PTC has earned a 100% score from the GreenGov Council for two consecutive years. PTC has earned two IBTTA Toll Excellence Awards for Social Responsibility for both its sustainability program and stormwater management program. To learn more about the PTC's efforts to becoming America's First Sustainable Superhighway by 2040, [please visit its website](#).