

ATTESTATION ENGAGEMENT

Township of Conneaut

Erie County, Pennsylvania

25-203

Liquid Fuels Tax Fund

For the Period

January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2024

July 2025



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General

Timothy L. DeFoor • Auditor General



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
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TIMOTHY L. DEFOOR
AUDITOR GENERAL

Independent Auditor's Report

The Honorable Michael Carroll
Secretary
Department of Transportation
Harrisburg, PA 17120

We have examined the accompanying Form MS-965 With Adjustments for the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund of the Township of Conneaut, Erie County, for the period January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2024. The municipality's management is responsible for presenting the Form MS-965 in accordance with the criteria described in the Background section of this report and the Department of Transportation's *Publication 9*. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the Form MS-965 With Adjustments based on our examination.

Our examination was conducted in accordance with attestation standards established by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and the standards applicable to attestation engagements contained in *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Those standards require that we plan and perform the examination to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the Form MS-965 is presented in accordance with the criteria described above, in all material respects. An examination involves performing procedures to obtain evidence about the Form MS-965. The nature, timing, and extent of the procedures selected depend on our judgement, including an assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the Form MS-965, whether due to fraud or error. We believe that the evidence we obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a reasonable basis for our qualified opinion.

We are required to be independent and to meet our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with ethical requirements relating to the engagement.

As described in the Auditor Description Of Select Transactions section of this report, the adjustments included on the Form MS-965 With Adjustments are made by the Department of the Auditor General.

As discussed in Finding No. 1, the township expended \$14,579.00 from the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund for 2A Modified stone, which is a nonpermissible expenditure.

Independent Auditor's Report (Continued)

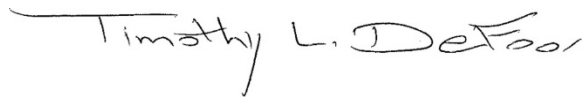
In our opinion, except for the effects of the deviations from the criteria discussed in the preceding paragraph, the Form MS-965 With Adjustments present, in all material respects, the information required by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation for the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund of the Township of Conneaut, Erie County, for the period January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2024, in accordance with the criteria described in the Background section of this report and the Department of Transportation's *Publication 9*.

In accordance with *Government Auditing Standards*, we are required to report all deficiencies that are considered to be significant deficiencies or material weaknesses in internal control; fraud and noncompliance with provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, or grant agreements that have a material effect on the Form MS-965; and any other instances that warrant the attention of those charged with governance. We are also required to obtain and report the views of responsible officials concerning the findings, conclusions, and recommendations, as well as any planned corrective actions. We performed our examination to express an opinion on whether the Form MS-965 is presented in accordance with the criteria described above and not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on internal control over the Form MS-965 or on compliance and other matters; accordingly, we express no such opinions. Our examination disclosed the following findings that are required to be reported under *Government Auditing Standards*:

- Nonpermissible Expenditure.
- Authorized Check Signers Are Related - Recurring.

The purpose of this report is to provide information related to the municipality's Liquid Fuels Tax Fund to assist the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation in fulfilling its regulatory authority as described in the laws and regulations identified in the Background section of this report and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation's *Publication 9*. This report is not suitable for any other purpose.

We appreciate the courtesy extended by the Township of Conneaut, Erie County, to us during the course of our examination. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Bureau of County Audits at 717-787-1363.



Timothy L. DeFoor
Auditor General
July 14, 2025

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TOWNSHIP OF CONNEAUT
ERIE COUNTY
LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND
BACKGROUND
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2024 TO DECEMBER 31, 2024

Background

The Liquid Fuels Tax Municipal Allocation Law¹ provides municipalities other than counties (i.e., townships, boroughs, cities, towns, home rule, and optional plan governments) with an annual allocation of liquid fuels taxes from the state's Motor License Fund to be used for the maintenance and repair of streets, roads, and bridges for which the municipality is responsible. The allocation of these funds to municipalities is based upon: (1) 50 percent on the municipality's proportion of local road mileage to the total local road mileage maintained by all political subdivisions making application in the county; and (2) 50 percent on the proportion of a municipality's population to the total population of all municipalities making application in the state.²

Section 9511 (relating to Allocation of proceeds) of the Pennsylvania Vehicle Code provides municipalities with annual maintenance payments to be received from the Motor License Fund.³

Each municipality must deposit the allocation of Liquid Fuels Tax funds and annual maintenance payments that it receives into a special fund called either the Municipal Liquid Fuels Tax Fund or State Fund. A municipality may not deposit any other monies into this fund except when the municipality does not have enough money in the special fund to meet the payments called for by its current annual budget for road and bridge purposes. In such a case, the municipality may borrow money or transfer money from its General Fund to its Liquid Fuels Tax Fund.

The Department of Transportation has been given the regulatory authority for the administration of these funds. Department of Transportation's *Publication 9* includes the policies and procedures for the administration of Act 655, as amended, and the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund money. However, if there is a difference between *Publication 9* and any legislation, the legislation shall govern.

To qualify for the annual allocation of Liquid Fuels Tax funds, *Publication 9* indicates that each municipality shall:

1. Submit annual reports (MS-965, Actual Use Report, MS-965P, Project and Miscellaneous Receipts, and MS-965S, Record of Checks).

¹ 72 P.S. § 2615.1 *et seq.*, Act 655 of 1956, as amended.

² 75 Pa.C.S. § 9010(c)(1)-(2) as last amended by Act 89 of 2013.

³ 75 Pa.C.S. § 9511, as last amended by Act 89 of 2013 and Act 101 of 2016, *See also* 72 P.S. § 2615.4, as last amended by Act 42 of 2013.

TOWNSHIP OF CONNEAUT
ERIE COUNTY
LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND
BACKGROUND
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2024 TO DECEMBER 31, 2024

Background (Continued)

2. Make deposits and payments or expenditures in compliance with Act 655, as amended. Failure to do so may result in not receiving allocations from PennDOT until all discrepancies are resolved. *Publication 9*, Section 2.6, includes information about investing Liquid Fuels Tax monies, using loan or bond proceeds, and types of receipts that can be placed into the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund.
3. Submit the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development's (DCED) Report of Elected and Appointed Officials by January 31st and the Survey of Financial Condition By March 15th.
4. Ensure resolution of all Contractor Responsibility Program (CRP) holds and blocks imposed by the Department of Revenue and the Department of Labor and Industry.
5. Ensure resolution of all reimbursements required as a result of audits performed by the Department of the Auditor General or monitoring reviews performed by the Department of Transportation's Financial Consultants.

Criteria

The criteria for the Form MS-965 With Adjustment are described below.

Section 1 of Form MS-965 With Adjustments provides a summary of Liquid Fuels Tax Fund expenditures by category. Categories requiring explanation include:

- Major equipment purchases are purchases of road machinery and road equipment with varying yearly costs in excess of the amounts indicated below:

<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>
<u>\$11,500.00</u>	<u>\$11,800.00</u>	<u>\$12,200.00</u>	<u>\$12,600.00</u>

- Minor equipment purchases are purchases of road machinery and road equipment with varying yearly costs that are less than or equal to the amounts indicated below:

<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>
<u>\$11,500.00</u>	<u>\$11,800.00</u>	<u>\$12,200.00</u>	<u>\$12,600.00</u>

- Agility projects are exchanges of services with the Department of Transportation.

TOWNSHIP OF CONNEAUT
ERIE COUNTY
LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND
BACKGROUND
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2024 TO DECEMBER 31, 2024

Background (Continued)

Section 2 of Form MS-965 With Adjustments provides information on the fund balance. Categories requiring explanation include:

- The state allocation is available from the Department of Transportation in March of each year. The amount the municipality receives is based half on its population and half on its road mileage.
- Municipalities that transferred roads from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to the municipality through the Highway Transfer Program receive annual turnback allocations in March of each year from the Department of Transportation. Turnback allocations are based on the mileage of the roads transferred.
- Expenditures include the total transferred from Section 1.

Section 3 of Form MS-965 With Adjustments determines if the municipality expended Liquid Fuels Tax Fund money in excess of the permissible amount for equipment and the balance that the municipality may carry forward for the purchase of equipment to the subsequent year.

Department of Transportation *Publication 9* requires that the amount expended for equipment purchases in a given year not exceed the sum of the equipment balance carried forward from the previous year and 20 percent of the current year's Liquid Fuels Tax Fund allocation and, if applicable, 20 percent of the turnback allocation plus other Department of Transportation approved adjustments.

If the municipality spent in excess of the amount listed on Line 4, the excess must be reimbursed to the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund.

The equipment balance to be carried forward for the subsequent year is the lesser of the amount on Line 6 or the ending fund balance on Line 6 of Section 2, but not less than zero.

TOWNSHIP OF CONNEAUT
ERIE COUNTY
LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND
BACKGROUND
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2024 TO DECEMBER 31, 2024

Background (Continued)

Basis of Presentation

The financial activities of the municipality are accounted for in separate funds. The Liquid Fuels Tax Fund is used to account for state aid revenues from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation used primarily for building and improving local roads and bridges. The Form MS-965 has been prepared in accordance with reporting requirements prescribed by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation as a result of the Fuels Tax Act 655, as amended, which does not constitute a complete presentation of the entity's assets, liabilities, expenses, and fund balance. Accordingly, the presentation of Form MS-965 With Adjustments is restricted to the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund, which represents a segment of the entity's financial activities.

Basis Of Accounting

The accompanying Form MS-965 With Adjustments is prepared in accordance with reporting requirements prescribed by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. Under this method, revenues are recognized when received and expenditures are recorded when paid.

General Fixed Assets

General fixed assets are recognized as expenditures at the time of purchase. No depreciation has been provided on the heavy equipment used to maintain and repair roads and bridges.

TOWNSHIP OF CONNEAUT
 ERIE COUNTY
 LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND
 2024 FORM MS-965 – SECTION 1
 WITH ADJUSTMENTS

<u>Expenditure Summary</u>	<u>Reported</u>	<u>Adjustments</u>	<u>Adjusted Amount</u>
Minor equipment purchases	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Computer/Computer related training	-	-	-
Major equipment purchases	21,692.33	-	21,692.33
Agility projects	-	-	-
Cleaning streets and gutters	-	-	-
Winter maintenance services	-	-	-
Traffic control devices	-	-	-
Street lighting	-	-	-
Storm sewers and drains	-	-	-
Repairs of tools and machinery	-	-	-
Maintenance and repair of roads and bridges	186,384.36	-	186,384.36
Highway construction and rebuilding projects	-	-	-
Miscellaneous	-	-	-
Total (To Section 2, Line 5)	<u>\$ 208,076.69</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 208,076.69</u>

TOWNSHIP OF CONNEAUT
 ERIE COUNTY
 LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND
 2024 FORM MS-965 – SECTION 2
 WITH ADJUSTMENTS

<u>Fund Balance</u>	<u>Reported</u>	<u>Adjustments</u>	<u>Adjusted Amount</u>
1. Balance, January 1, 2024	\$ 25,003.52	\$ -	\$ 25,003.52
Receipts:			
2. State allocation	196,255.63	-	196,255.63
2a. Turnback allocation	20,480.00	-	20,480.00
2b. Interest on investments	13.75	-	13.75
2c. Miscellaneous	-	136,045.41	136,045.41
3. Total receipts	<u>216,749.38</u>	<u>136,045.41</u>	<u>352,794.79</u>
4. Total funds available	<u>241,752.90</u>	<u>136,045.41</u>	<u>377,798.31</u>
5. Expenditures (Section 1)	<u>208,076.69</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>208,076.69</u>
6. Balance, December 31, 2024	<u><u>\$ 33,676.21</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 136,045.41</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 169,721.62</u></u>

TOWNSHIP OF CONNEAUT
 ERIE COUNTY
 LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND
 2024 FORM MS-965 – SECTION 3
 WITH ADJUSTMENTS

<u>Equipment Balance</u>	<u>Reported</u>	<u>Adjustments</u>	<u>Adjusted Amount</u>
1. Prior year equipment balance	\$ 25,003.52	\$ -	\$ 25,003.52
2. Add: Current year equipment allocation (20% of Lines 2 + 2a, Section 2)	43,347.13	-	43,347.13
3. PENNDOT approved adjustments	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
4. Total funds available for equipment acquisition	68,350.65	-	68,350.65
5. Less: Major equipment expenditures	<u>21,692.33</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>21,692.33</u>
6. Remainder	<u>46,658.32</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>46,658.32</u>
7. Equipment balance available for subsequent year (Lesser of Line 6 or Section 2 balance, but not less than zero)	<u>\$ 33,676.21</u>	<u>\$ 12,982.11</u>	<u>\$ 46,658.32</u>

TOWNSHIP OF CONNEAUT
ERIE COUNTY
LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND
AUDITOR DESCRIPTION OF SELECT TRANSACTIONS
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2024 TO DECEMBER 31, 2024

The following information relates to certain types of transactions for which the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation requested that we provide additional detail.

Adjustments

Section 2

An adjustment of \$136,045.41 was made to “Miscellaneous” because a transfer in error was not reported.

Transfer In Error

On December 24, 2024, the municipality transferred \$136,045.41 from its American Rescue Plan account to its Liquid Fuels Tax Fund in error. The municipality transferred this amount from its Liquid Fuels Tax Fund to its General Fund to correct the transfer in error on January 2, 2025, which was subsequent to our examination period.

Lease-Purchase Agreement

On May 6, 2020, the municipality entered into a lease-purchase agreement with FNB Equipment Finance to purchase a 2019 Ford F-550 chassis cab with dump, plow, and hydraulic for \$100,315.00. The agreement was for a term of five years at an interest rate of 3.82 percent. Principal and interest payments of \$21,692.33 are due annually. Prior years’ principal and interest payments from the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund were \$78,964.05 and \$7,805.27, respectively.

During the current examination period, the municipality paid principal of \$21,350.95 and interest of \$341.38 from the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund. These amounts are reflected in major equipment purchases on the 2024 MS-965 - Section 1. The lease-purchase agreement was paid-in-full on April 21, 2024.

TOWNSHIP OF CONNEAUT
ERIE COUNTY
LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2024 TO DECEMBER 31, 2024

Finding No 1 - Nonpermissible Expenditure

We tested five expenditures totaling \$208,076.69 and found that the municipality expended \$14,579.00 during 2024 from the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund for Type 2A Modified stone, which is a nonpermissible expenditure.

Stone approved by the Department of Transportation are listed in the Department of Transportation Specifications *Publication 408*, Section 703.2. Type 2A Modified stone is not approved for use by municipalities in *Publication 408*.

This condition occurred because the township was unaware that 2A Modified stone was not a permissible expenditure from the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund.

The failure to purchase stone that is approved by the Department of Transportation could result in the municipality having to reimburse \$14,579.00 to its Liquid Fuels Tax Fund.

Recommendations

We recommend that the municipality reimburse \$14,579.00 to its Liquid Fuels Tax Fund upon official notification by the Department of Transportation.

We further recommend that, in the future, the municipality purchase stone that is approved by the Department of Transportation.

Management's Response

The supervisor/secretary/treasurer stated:

I was not aware that 2A Modified Limestone was not permissible. Nonpermissible expenditure of \$14,579.00 will be transferred back to Liquid Fuels account at request of PennDOT.

Auditor's Conclusion

During our next examination, we will determine if the municipality complied with our recommendations.

TOWNSHIP OF CONNEAUT
ERIE COUNTY
LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2024 TO DECEMBER 31, 2024

Finding No. 2 - Authorized Check Signers Are Related - Recurring

We cited the municipality for authorized check signers being related in our prior report for the period January 1 2023 to December 31, 2023. During our current examination, we reviewed bank signature cards and noted that two of the three people authorized to sign checks from the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund are related, and the township only requires two signatures on Liquid Fuels Tax Fund checks. The township officials authorized to sign checks are the three township supervisors, two of which are brothers.

An entity's system of internal controls should include procedures to prevent the possibility of related people authorizing checks.

This condition occurred after the secretary/treasurer retired. At the time, the township required three signatures on all Liquid Fuels Tax Fund checks but discontinued the practice by having two supervisors sign Liquid Fuels Tax Fund checks. There is no documentation to support that the authorized check signers should be unrelated.

When related persons are authorized to sign checks, there is an increased risk of unauthorized disbursements, errors, or misappropriation of assets.

Recommendation

We recommend that the municipality ensure that either none of the authorized check signers are related or that the number of signatures required ensures that at least two signers are unrelated to the other signer.

Management's Response

The supervisor/secretary/treasurer stated:

We put in last year's minutes that we require only two signatures. We needed to be more specific that two "unrelated individuals" need to sign. Wording will be corrected at July 7, 2025, meeting.

Auditor's Conclusion

During our next examination, we will determine if the municipality complied with our recommendation.

TOWNSHIP OF CONNEAUT
ERIE COUNTY
LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND
SUMMARY OF ONSITE CLOSEOUT MEETING
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2024 TO DECEMBER 31, 2024

An onsite closeout meeting was held June 17, 2025. Those participating were:

TOWNSHIP OF CONNEAUT

The Honorable Denise M. Fetterolf, Supervisor/Secretary/Treasurer

DEPARTMENT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL

Mr. Joe Soltis, Auditor

TOWNSHIP OF CONNEAUT
ERIE COUNTY
LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND
REPORT DISTRIBUTION
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2024 TO DECEMBER 31, 2024

This report was initially distributed to:

The Honorable Michael Carroll
Secretary
Department of Transportation

Township of Conneaut
Erie County
12500 US Route 6N
Albion, PA 15401

The Honorable Daniel G. Tercho
Chairman of the Board of Supervisors

The Honorable Denise M. Fetterolf
Supervisor/Secretary/Treasurer

This report is a matter of public record and is available online at www.PaAuditor.gov. Media questions about the report can be directed to the Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General, Office of Communications, 229 Finance Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120; via email to: news@PaAuditor.gov.