

Plan for Transportation

Introduction

The public survey conducted near the beginning of the plan development process showed that traffic volume is by far the most critical concern of Township residents. Volume and congestion has reached a point on the principal roads that many drivers now resort to the secondary roads to avoid them where possible, thereby worsening the situation throughout the Township. It is generally believed that much of the traffic, particularly on Route 252 and Providence Road, is created by residents from the surrounding communities looking for quicker routes to reach I-476 (the “Blue Route”) or the Route 1 By-Pass. This is therefore a regional issue, and the situation is expected to worsen as numerous developments already approved along the Route 252 corridor are built out.

As we noted in Chapter 17, the paths connecting home, work, play, and commerce are critical to the vitality of the Township. While the growing volume of traffic threatens this vitality, Upper Providence is fortunate in that there are alternatives to the private automobile. In this chapter, we will identify ways to address the concerns related to highway traffic as well as explore ways to develop the alternatives to increase their usefulness to Township residents.

Road Network

Volume and congestion are closely related issues, but are not identical. A high volume of traffic is not a problem where the road in question has been designed to accommodate that volume. Congestion results when the volume of traffic exceeds the design capacity. It should be noted that a moderate degree of congestion is not necessarily a bad thing, particularly if there is a desire to limit vehicle speeds: congested roads tend to have slow-moving traffic. Finally, assuring complete lack of congestion at all times on all roads is not a practical policy. Implementing such a policy would create, in theory, roads that would be under-utilized for all but a few minutes each day. The reality is more complex. As noted in the introduction, traffic volumes and congestion are problematic throughout metropolitan Philadelphia, not just in Upper Providence. If the Township had the ability to add lanes to its roads at will, the most likely result would be that volume would increase as quickly as capacity was added. That is, there would be more traffic, not less. These observations resulted in the policies established in Chapter 4: the need to cooperate at a multi-municipal or regional level to establish a regional plan for traffic management and the desire to avoid adding lanes to existing roads purely for the sake of increasing capacity.

The transportation plan must be developed to complement the land use plan; obviously, the transportation network must be capable of accommodating the traffic that will be generated by the proposed land uses. We note that the future land use plan in Chapter 7 calls for improvements to the segments of Providence Road and State Road that serve the Township’s principal retail districts. While these improvements are not necessarily addressing any particular deficiency, we have included them here as they are most directly related to roads. It appears that parking concerns are limited to a few specific locations: mostly the businesses along Providence Road and at the Media train station. For this reason, the issue of parking is

not addressed by any one goal, but is included with several of the objective statements where appropriate.

The portion of the plan that addresses the road network is a combination of structural improvements (to address design deficiencies and safety concerns) and administrative actions to address the issue of congestion throughout the region. In some cases, both kinds of action will be required.

GOAL: Develop a regional, multi-municipal management plan to address issues of traffic volume and congestion.

Objective 1: Establish contact with surrounding municipalities, Delaware County, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), the Delaware County Transportation Management Association (DCTMA), the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA), and PennDOT to generate interest and to secure commitment to complete such a plan by 2009.

Objective 2: Contact local legislators (i.e., State Senators, State Representatives) for assistance.

Objective 3: Identify potential funding sources.

Objective 4: Develop a strategy to keep work on this goal in the minds of the public, including frequent contact with local legislators.

GOAL: Develop and implement structural solutions for the design deficiencies identified in the "Transportation Network" chapter.

Objective 1: Contact Delaware County and PennDOT to secure design assistance and funding.

Objective 2: Initiate re-design of Route 1 interchange and Providence Road corridor between Kirk Lane and Rose Tree Road.

Objective 3: Initiate re-design for intersection of Providence Road and Route 252.

Objective 4: Explore options for improving the design of "2650 Curve" on Providence Road.

Objective 5: Conduct an analysis of the Ridley Creek Road corridor to identify specific design deficiencies and propose solutions.

Objective 6: Identify appropriate locations for traffic calming measures, giving particular attention to areas frequented by pedestrians and evaluating specific traffic calming structural improvements. Collector and minor arterial roads are a particular concern as they are more frequently used by pedestrians than the higher capacity roads, but these roads are popular short-cuts and are accommodating more traffic.

Objective 7: Compile a library of traffic impact studies in cooperation with surrounding municipalities.

GOAL: Redesign the Providence Road corridor between Rose Tree Park and the Media Borough line to enhance safety, to accommodate pedestrians, to provide sufficient parking facilities, and to improve appearance.

Objective 1: Secure professional assistance to execute a high quality design and to identify funding sources for construction.

GOAL: Redesign the State Road corridor between Bobbin Mill Road and the Media Borough line to enhance safety, to accommodate pedestrians, and to improve appearance.

Objective 1: Secure professional assistance to execute a high quality design and to identify funding sources for construction.

Public Transportation

Chapter 17 notes that the southern part of the Township is relatively well served by mass transit: the Media station of SEPTA's R-3 regional rail line (actually located in Upper Providence) is so popular that the parking lot adjacent to the station is typically full on any given weekday. Obviously, this is a cause for some concern, as there are almost certainly potential passengers who are not being served. The existing parking lot is already as large as can be accommodated, so some more creative solutions are required to increase ridership from this station.

GOAL: Establish and maintain a co-operative relationship with SEPTA in order to assure that the Township's mass transit needs are addressed appropriately.

Objective 1: Commission an analysis of the Media Station to identify ways to increase ridership given the extremely limited opportunities to expand the existing parking lot

Objective 2: Evaluate the feasibility of providing shuttle service to the Station from off-site/remote parking areas or in the form of "feeder" routes.

Objective 3: Identify opportunities to expand bus and trolley service, including improved parking availability for users of these services.

Alternate Modes of Transit

There is near-universal agreement that traffic is a critical concern for the Township, but the chief difficulty of addressing this issue in a meaningful way is the simple fact that most people need to use their cars in order to access their jobs and to go shopping. Even the residents who use the bus and train usually get to the bus stop or the train station in a car. Improving facilities for walking and bicycle travel is one way to reduce residents' reliance upon their cars, at least for short trips. Due to the regional nature of the congestion issue, any reduction in overall volume of automobile traffic is expected to be negligible. However, the idea is not just reduction of traffic volume, but to enhance residents' overall quality of life. One way to do so is to provide *alternatives* for residents' travel that are well-designed, safe, and attractive. Facilitating bicycle and pedestrian travel throughout the Township may have minimal impact upon the single issue of automobile traffic, but will significantly improve the broader "quality of life" concern for individuals who no longer need to get into their cars for every trip away from home.

Public response to providing or improving accommodations for pedestrians and bicycles was generally positive, but it was clear that such accommodation must be consistent with the character of the affected neighborhoods. We noted that residents of the more rural parts of

the Township did not want sidewalks, but favored trails and paths. Residents of the more densely developed areas liked the idea of better sidewalk connections. ALL of these - trails, paths, and sidewalks - are intended to accommodate pedestrians: the functions are the same, but the design is different. Trails and paths are more appropriate in a natural setting while a sidewalk has a more urban or suburban feel; they both achieve the purpose of providing a transit alternative, as well as a recreational opportunity.

GOAL: Identify potential routes for trails, paths, and sidewalks to connect residential areas with facilities such as parks, schools, churches, transit stops, retail areas, and employment centers.

Objective 1: Implement the trail recommendations of the open space network proposed for the Township by the Natural Lands Trust in 2003.

Objective 2: Identify suitable extensions of the Media sidewalk network in cooperation with the Borough.

Objective 3: Explore the applicability of funding sources for implementation, including the federal TEA-21 program (and its successors) and the "Safe Routes to School" program administered by PennDOT.

Objective 4: Work with the Bicycle Coalition and organizations with similar interests to identify potential/preferred bicycle routes through the Township.

Objective 5: Utilize designs and construction materials for sidewalks and pathways that will minimize the environmental impact of these features.