

Background Data Report – Transportation

One of the primary challenges for the township’s future will be the ability of the existing roadway network to accommodate future growth and development. Increased housing development in the township and in surrounding communities has already placed greater strain on the capacity of the road networks which leads to congestion and accelerated wear and tear on the area’s roads and bridges. New roads created to service individual housing developments have introduced more cul-de-sacs and stub-out streets with limited ability to connect those streets to existing ones, and concentrates traffic on the limited connected network. Almost all of the township’s roadways, including the major arterial highways, are two lanes, which can result in traffic back ups because drivers are forced to wait behind turning vehicles if there is no turning lane or shoulder space to pass. Sidewalks and pedestrian amenities are limited in the township, as are bike lanes and dedicated bike routes. Trail networks are also limited, and primarily exist only within open space or parks but do not connect users between open space and park locations. Development of proposed local and county trails would increase this network and build connectivity. Future transportation goals should address matters of shifting circulation patterns based on new development and future development pressures, and the need to create connected networks that link destinations within the township to larger regional destinations. Please review the provided data and consider the questions and prompts provided in the “Key Takeaways” section.

Vehicular Roadways

Ownership

New Hanover owns a majority of the roadways in the township except for:

- Swamp Pike (Montgomery County owned road)
- Big Road - Route 73 (PennDOT)
- Charlotte Street/Layfield Road – PA Route 663 (PennDOT)

Both the state and the county are responsible for maintenance activities on their own roadways. New developments situated along county or state owned roads needs to apply for a Highway Occupancy Permit (HOP) to obtain permission to create new curb cuts that take vehicular access off of these roadways.

The Township Public Works department maintains about 80-90 miles of local roadway in the township, with responsibilities ranging from snow plowing/salting or brining roadways in advance of wintry precipitation to patching and repaving of the roadway surfaces. Road repairs primarily take the form of:

- Sealant – either chip seal (which may be contracted out) or fog seal (lasts 7-10 years)
- Cold in-place recycling – where roadway is ground and rerolled (lasts 20 years)
- Mill and overlay – where the top layer of roadway is removed and fully replaced (lasts 20-25 years)

Classification

The New Hanover Zoning Ordinance identifies the classification of existing roadways in the township as belonging to the following categories: Rural Arterial Highway; Developed Arterial Highway; Major Collector Highway; Minor Collector Roads; Local Roads. Designation for Marginal Access Streets and Alleys is also provided, but few if any roadways fall under these classifications. The cartway width denotes the minimum width of the actual roadway, while the ultimate right-of-way (UROW) denotes the full extent of where other streetscape improvements can be located, including sidewalks, and “reserves” the space for future road widening if needed.

Street Classification	Cartway (feet)
Rural Arterial	(^[1]) UROW 120 ft
Developed Arterial	() UROW 80 ft
Major Collector	36; UROW 80 ft
Minor Collector	30; UROW 60 ft
Local Roads	28; UROW 52 ft
Marginal Access	24; UROW 47 ft
Alley	22; UROW 36 ft
Private Roads	(^[2])
^[1] As required by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation or the County of Montgomery.	
^[2] As determined by the Township Supervisors with direction from the Township Engineer.	

Classification levels for new streets are identified in the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance based on projected traffic volumes, which requires different ultimate right-of-way widths for each street classification. Street classifications are based on ADT counts (Average Daily Traffic) which is the average number of vehicles traveling on different sections of the roadways. Based on current ADTs calculated by DVRPC, many roadways in the township carry higher volumes of cars than what their classification would indicate. To address this inconsistency, the township may consider re-classifying these roadways to higher classifications to reflect the higher traffic volumes. Major implications of this re-classification would be a change in the required cartway and rights-of-way for properties fronting the roadways, which may result in many properties becoming non-conforming because building setbacks and established rights-of-way would have been determined at the lower classification. Some of the local roadways (roadways with ADTs less than 500) that could be re-classified as minor collectors (ADTs between 501 and 1,000) based on ADT counts include Middle Creek Road (~3,000 ADT), Church Road (875 ADT), and Lutheran Road (623 ADT). A full network analysis should be conducted of the existing

roadway networks to determine suitability or need for re-classification. Origin/destination studies should be conducted to determine if the roadways are serving local or regional traffic. Any analysis conducted should consider the function of the roadways within the larger network, and how new classifications would fit in with the larger state and county network.

Swamp Pike carries the most traffic through the township, with PA 663 and PA 73 being the other top roadways for vehicle traffic.

Roadway Improvements

Roads are required to be curbed, primarily for reasons of stormwater management, but many roadways were in existence before the ordinance was adopted and do not contain curbing or sidewalks. As land developments fill in developable land, some of this infrastructure is being installed, but there are definite gaps in the network. Specific projects were identified in the 1998 Comprehensive Plan, but more recent studies have identified the following project:

The **PMRPC Comprehensive Plan** (2015) identified “County Recommended Projects” (pg. 140) that are not currently in the TIP, but are priority projects that will be nominated for future TIP funding. One project in New Hanover was identified as a priority project, and has since been completed:

- Swamp Pike at PA 663: Widen PA 663 to accommodate exclusive left turn lanes on both approaches to Swamp Pike.

DVRPC Regional Traffic Study has identified one project in New Hanover Township. This study was conducted as part of the Pottstown Area Regional Plan Development element of DVRPCs work program to identify potential roadway safety and improvement projects to address traffic growth in the region.

- The intersection of PA 73 and Middle Creek Road was identified as a location of transportation concerns based on the project impact of future development. Proposed intersection improvements include the installation of a traffic signal, road widening to add left-turn lanes on PA 73 (for turns onto Middle Creek Road), sidewalks and ADA curb ramps, and a buffered bicycle lane on PA 73 west of the intersection.

The county’s comprehensive plan, **Montco2040**, identified two “Vision Roadway Projects”:

- Intersection improvements at PA 663/Layfield Rd and PA 73/Big Rd.
- Intersection improvements at PA 663/Layfield Rd and Hoffmansville Road to re-grade to improve alignment and sight distance, and allow for future turn lanes.

The township has an active **Act 209** and is in the final stages of updating it. The Act 209 process required an updated Land Use Assumptions Report with an updated service area map, a roadway sufficiency analysis, and a capital improvements plan that identifies what improvements are needed to acquire the desired level of service. The update will amend the 209 fees collected as part of developments, which are based on how many new weekday trips a development will generate. These collected funds are earmarked for specific roadway improvement projects and are not aggregated into the general funds.

Collected 209 fees can also be used as match dollars towards transportation grants to leverage additional funding for transportation projects.

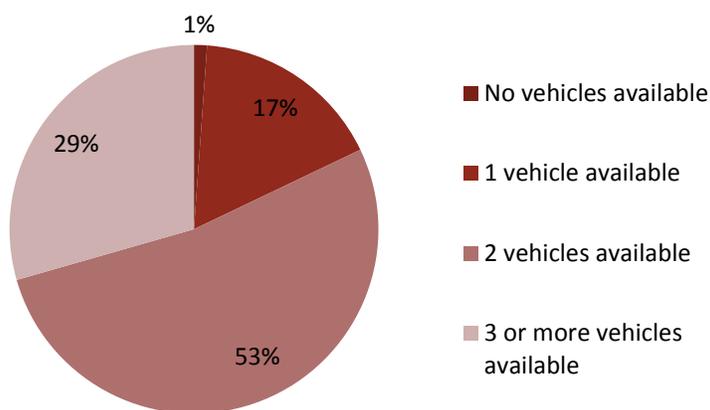
Road Safety

The majority of car crashes occur along Charlotte Street/PA 663 and Swamp Pike, and at the intersection of those two streets. This is an area of serious concern for future traffic incidents as continued development in this growth area will increase vehicular traffic volumes. Other areas with concentrations of crashes were at Charlotte Street and Big Road, and a number of crashes occurred along Charlotte Street, Big Road, and Swamp Pike where these major roadways intersect with smaller collector and local roads. Many of these intersection locations are stop-controlled only on the feeder roads, and some locations may have poor sight distances, especially problematic if through traffic is exceeding the speed limit. The majority of crashes involving two vehicles were either rear-end crashes or angled crashes, with few head-on crashes. The greatest number of crashes involved one vehicle hitting a fixed object.

Car Ownership

Almost all households own at least one car, and more than 75% of households own two or more cars. The vast majority of residents commute to their jobs by driving alone (85%) while about 7% of residents carpool, and about 6% of residents work from home and do not commute. The average commuting time to work is 35 minutes, but only 42% of residents had commutes of less than 30 minutes. 39% of residents had commutes between 30 and 60 minutes, and 19% of residents had commute times of over an hour. Long commute times indicate residents’ places of employment may be located far away, or they experience higher levels of traffic congestion along their commuting route. (We will explore this relationship more during our section discussion on economic development.)

Household Vehicle Ownership



Travel Time to Work

Less than 10 minutes	5.6%
10 to 14 minutes	8.1%
15 to 19 minutes	12.3%
20 to 24 minutes	12.0%
25 to 29 minutes	3.8%
30 to 34 minutes	11.4%
35 to 44 minutes	10.7%
45 to 59 minutes	16.7%
60 or more minutes	19.3%

Bridges

The township is pursuing a bridge replacement program to use state and grant funding to bring the six township-owned bridges up to suitable levels of operation. PennDOT owns four bridges on township roads: three on New Hanover Square Road and one on Fagleysville Road. Four other state owned bridges are on PA Route 663. Montgomery County owns nine bridges in the township. Current bridge projects include the replacement of the bridge crossing Swamp Creek on Swamp Pike near the intersection with New Hanover Square Road; the bridge crossing Minister Creek on Lutheran Road near the intersection with Swamp Pike and; the bridge crossing Schlegel Run on Ludwig Road near the intersection with Middle Creek Road. Because bridge replacement projects close down sections of the roadways for extended periods and often require long detours, the township should coordinate with the County's Roads and Bridges Department to ensure detours are planned in a way to minimize traffic disruption to the greatest extent possible.

Bike Lanes

PA 73 is identified as a priority bicycle route in the county's bike plan, *Bike Montco*. Other roadways identified as part of the Planned Bicycle Network include PA 663; Moyer Road west of PA 663/N Charlotte Street; Fagleysville Road from PA 73 to Swamp Pike and Sanatoga Road south of Swamp Pike; Little Road across the township to Hoffmansville Road; Deep Creek Road east of PA 663; and Hill Road across the northern end of the township.

The Township also has a Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan that identifies a connected network of trails linking residential areas to parks and open space areas, and along major roadways.

Trails

West County Trail is a proposed county multi-use trail that is proposed to connect into the Perkiomen Trail at the lower end of the Green Lane recreation area in Upper Frederick Township and continue through Camp Laughing Waters east of New Hanover Square Road, then cutting through the township following Minister Creek over Swamp Pike and PA 663 before entering Douglass Township and tracking south to terminate at the Schuylkill River Trail in Pottstown.

The **Sunrise Trail** is a proposed trail alignment that would connect into the West County Trail at its terminus at New Hanover Square Road. It would link Camp Laughing Waters to the Sunrise Mill Open Space, and further east to the Perkiomen Trail where the Sunrise Trail will originate in Schwenksville Borough. This project has received preliminary funding from the township, the county, and state grant funding. The phases through New Hanover are anticipated to be completed during later implementation phases, although primary initial goals include permanent preservation of the Camp Laughing Waters property.

The New Hanover Master Bike/Trails Plan identifies 15 proposed bike and pedestrian trails. Some of these trail alignments correspond with primary bike routes and multi-use trails identified in the county's bike plan and walkability plan. One limitation to the plan is that the trail networks are not prioritized for implementation. A clear understanding of the needs and phasing goals for implementation would strengthen the township's ability to pursue funding and require connectivity as nearby developments

are proposed and constructed. As trail systems are developed, special attention should be paid to building even greater connectivity to the trailheads through local sidewalk development and trail parking, where needed.

Sidewalks

A majority of the township has no sidewalk networks, although many of the newer residential subdivisions have internal sidewalk networks on one or both sides of the street. Some of these sidewalks are connected with painted crosswalks and ADA ramps at intersections.

Public Transportation

There is no public transportation option within the township. The PMRPC Comprehensive Plan notes that an extension of the SEPTA Manayunk/Norristown regional rail line has been proposed that would terminate in Wyomissing and include a stop in Pottstown Borough. This rail extension, known as the Schuylkill Valley Metro, could provide an alternate commuting option to relieve congestion on US 422. However, there is limited funding for such a rail extension project and it is unlikely to happen in the near future.

Regionally, the Pottstown Area Rapid Transit (PART) operates bus service within Pottstown and adjacent municipalities, but does not currently serve destinations in New Hanover Township. A new line extension, the Orange Line, will bring service to Gilbertsville and Boyertown, but will not service any stops within the township. The Orange Line will run from the Pottstown Transportation Center to Gilbertsville in Douglass Township via Gilbertsville Road before heading into Boyertown and circling up to the Boyertown Giant.

Key Takeaways

Roadway Concerns and Improvements

Increased development within the township and surrounding municipalities has resulted in more vehicles traveling on road network than ever before. Many of these roadways were not specifically designed to handle the increased capacity they now carry, which contributes to traffic congestion and higher rates of crashes. Multiple studies have identified key intersection and roadway improvements to reduce traffic conflicts, ease congestion, and improve safety. Additional studies could analyze traffic flows within the larger region to determine if roadways are properly managed or if additional improvements are needed, or if roadways need to be reclassified. While extremely challenging based on property ownership and cost constraints, new roadway connectors may be necessary to facilitate traffic flows through the township. Future studies could identify these potential patterns.

- Intersection improvements identified in previous studies and within the township's Act 209 should be a focus for capital spending to improve the roadway network. What other projects are being considered, and what are the funding/partnership needs?
- What additional roadway concerns or locations do you have? Are there problematic areas in particular – either an intersection or a roadway segment?

- What are your major safety concerns, either as a pedestrian, biker, or driver?
- General roadway maintenance on township owned roads is managed primarily by the public works department. More roadways would put strain on the capacity limitations of township resources (staffing, equipment) but some technology improvements are being implemented that will improve management of roadway repair and maintenance needs.
- “Complete Streets” policies encourage road designs that consider the needs of all roadway users – are there areas in the township you feel this approach should be implemented?

Connectivity

The township lacks clear multimodal connectivity for all roadway users. Vehicular networks are being constructed to service housing developments internally without much coordination to establish linkages between housing developments. Pedestrian networks are also largely limited to sidewalks located exclusively within developments that do not connect to other developments along the collector and arterial roadways. From a health perspective, limited opportunities for active lifestyles and heavy reliance on vehicular trips can lead to negative health outcomes. Bike lanes do not exist, although some bike routes have been identified. Formalization of these routes would require installation of on-road bike lanes, use of shoulders, or creation of side paths (which could also be used for pedestrian connection).

- What types of connections would you want to prioritize? What connections (vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle) do you think offer the most value to the community?
 - Where are these connections most important to establish or enhance?
 - How important are trails to you to provide recreation and connectivity between residential areas and parks?
 - If you only had a certain amount of funding, what implementation project would you want to achieve first?
- What interest, if any, is there in expanding access to public transportation options? It is not anticipated any SEPTA extensions will occur within the next 20 years to provide closer access to the Philadelphia Regional Rail, and it is assumed that residents who commute into the city via public transportation drive to a SEPTA station (Lansdale or Norristown are likely the closest). Park and Rides could be an option for reducing individual trips to regional rail stations if there is enough interest and demand. With the future development of the New Hanover Town Center, there may also be a demand to expand PART service to that development. Would there be support for a recommendation to pursue an extension of service should the town center be developed?