

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION TECHNICAL BULLETIN

Active transportation is human-powered transportation, i.e., walking and biking. Every day, people walk and bike for all kinds of reasons—whether it's getting to work, going to drop their kids off at school, picking up their groceries, or just to recreate outdoors. These plans serve as a guide for the development of existing and potential networks for a range of users—all ages and abilities—including, but not limited to, walkers, joggers, cyclists and those with disabilities.

Active transportation planning includes several benefits: increasing safety, reducing congestion, improving air quality, enhancing public health, supporting the local economy and providing access and mobility for those unable to drive. In addition, these plans outline potential treatments for existing networks, like traffic calming measures, ADA-related improvements (i.e., curb ramps), or wayfinding and signage (i.e., pedestrian crossing). This technical bulletin summarizes the process and key elements involved in the acceptance of an active transportation plan in Pennsylvania. While the purpose and benefits are similar in Delaware, the development and acceptance process may vary, due to the differences in the structure of local government.

BENEFITS

- **Increasing Safety:** Expanding transportation networks and facilities expands the opportunity for users of all ages, skills and abilities to use such facilities. With appropriate design and public outreach, a

reduction in pedestrian and bicycle related accidents can be realized.

- **Reducing Congestion:** Replacing shorter drives with walking or biking can reduce the number of cars (specifically one-person passenger cars) on the road. With less vehicles on the road, traffic congestion could lessen, limiting travel time.
- **Improving Air Quality:** Modes of active transportation are zero-emission modes, meaning they avoid greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs). With more trails, sidewalks, paths or bike lanes on the ground, there is less of a need for single-use cars for shorter trips (when cars are the least efficient) and encourages residents to use alternative modes of transportation to get to their destination.
- **Enhancing Public Health:** Increasing access to active transportation networks increases the opportunity for residents of all ages and abilities to recreate outside, contributing to improved health and wellness of residents.
- **Supporting the Local Economy:** Expanding existing and potential networks that connect neighborhoods to downtown areas improves access to jobs and commercial spaces, bolstering the vitality and economy of a community.
- **Increasing Access and Mobility:** Not all individuals have access to a vehicle or have the capability to drive. Increasing opportunities to access alternative active transportation modes, more individuals can safely connect themselves to key destinations—places of employment, grocery stores, or healthcare—at low to no cost.



MISCONCEPTIONS

- **Not a Comprehensive Plan:** The Active Transportation Plan is a distinct, accepted document for development and implementation of proposed active transportation networks. This plan specifically looks at existing and potential transportation networks (i.e., trails, pedestrian paths, bike lanes, etc.) for increased safety. This could be a goal in the municipality's Comprehensive Plan.
- **Is not a considered a Taking of Land:** Establishing an Active Transportation Plan does not mean the municipality takes ownership of the mapped areas for potential pedestrian or bike amenity.
- **Does Not Imply Responsibility for Maintaining, Improving or Opening of Mapped Facilities or Lands:** This plan is to evaluate existing and potential connections regarding functionality and safety; therefore, it does not designate management needs for proposed amenities.



Getting outside is a great way to improve one's health and wellness, no matter your age or ability.

WHAT CAN BE INCLUDED

An Active Transportation Plan is not a requirement in the Pennsylvania Municipalities Code (MPC). Features identified in the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, How-To Guide for Developing Active Transportation Plans:

- Vision, goals and objectives for pedestrian, bicyclist, and other opportunities in the study area and surrounding area, incorporating stakeholder feedback.
- Assessment of existing conditions to understand issues and potential areas of opportunities, which include, but are not limited to relevant plans and studies; inventory of existing infrastructure (for pedestrians, bicyclists, equestrians, etc.); US Census data on population and employment; Pennsylvania Crash Information Tool (PCIT) data on crashes involving pedestrians and bicyclists; and volume count data.
- Stakeholder/community feedback to identify gaps and generate potential opportunities.
- Proposed network expansions/amenities, including but not limited to connections to specific destinations (i.e., schools, parks, downtown centers); and connections to existing pedestrian and bicycle facilities (within the study area and surrounding area).
- Identify priority proposed projects to create strategies for funding and development.
- Prioritize proposed projects based on the following factors: physical constraints, project cost, implementation capability, demand, potential benefit, and relevance to other projects/plans.
- Identify potential funding sources. Potential sources can include federal, state, local, or private funds.
- Create measures to track project goals and objectives. Potential measures can include linear feet of sidewalk, volume of pedestrians or bicyclists on infrastructure, and safety data involving pedestrians, bicyclists, vehicles, etc.
- Establish implementation strategies for goals and objectives.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- An Active Transportation Plan should support the goals of an adopted Comprehensive Plan.
- Robust public engagement and education should be included during development to address goals and objectives, along with misconceptions about the term “active transportation” throughout this process. It can be helpful to engage property owners, business owners and other community stakeholders early in the process. Proactive transparency is key.
- Active Transportation Plans typically take 12 to 14 months to develop.
- Financial and technical support may be offered through county planning commissions.
- Additional plans and studies may be needed to supplement the implementation of goals identified in an Active Transportation Plan to understand project costs, physical constraints or feasibility.

ENABLING LEGISLATION

Pennsylvania and Delaware Planning Code

An Active Transportation Plan is not a requirement in the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) or Delaware State Code.

EXAMPLES

Chester County

- Chester County Planning Commission (2020)
 - Includes review of existing zoning ordinances and Subdivision and Land Development ordinances related to trails and transportation.
- Oxford Borough, Chester County (2023)
 - Includes opportunities for new connections, while evaluating existing networks for pedestrians, bicyclists and others.
- Upper Uwchlan Township, Chester County (2024)
 - Includes proposed bike routes, trails, road widening, and pedestrian/bicyclist improvements for increased safety.

Lancaster County

- City of Lancaster, Lancaster County (2019)
 - Includes expanding connections to promote health, safety and economic prosperity.

Montgomery County

- Montgomery County Planning Commission (2024)
 - Includes circulation planning, traffic calming strategies and wayfinding signage for increased safety.



Trails can be mowed paths, asphalt, or gravel pathways.

- Lower Merion Township, Montgomery Township (2024)
 - Includes strategies and measures to ensure walkers, cyclers and more find transportation convenient and safe.

Monroe County

- Eastern Monroe Township, Monroe County (2020)
 - Includes opportunities for regional network expansion and strategies for existing infrastructure improvement.

Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT)

- PennDOT (2019)
 - Includes improving transportation opportunities for Pennsylvanians.

- Determine the potential networks to represent on the map. These features could include, but are not limited to, pedestrian and bicycle expansions and new connections to community amenities within the Township or regional connections.
- An engineer, planning consultant or surveyor can assist with producing the map.

Draft Active Transportation Plan

- The draft plan should highlight specific potential projects based on opportunities for expansion or improvement based on existing conditions and stakeholder input.
- This should also include information on further feasibility studies, funding sources and timelines to establish a prioritized list of the proposed priority projects.

DEVELOPMENT AND ADOPTION

Identify Goals

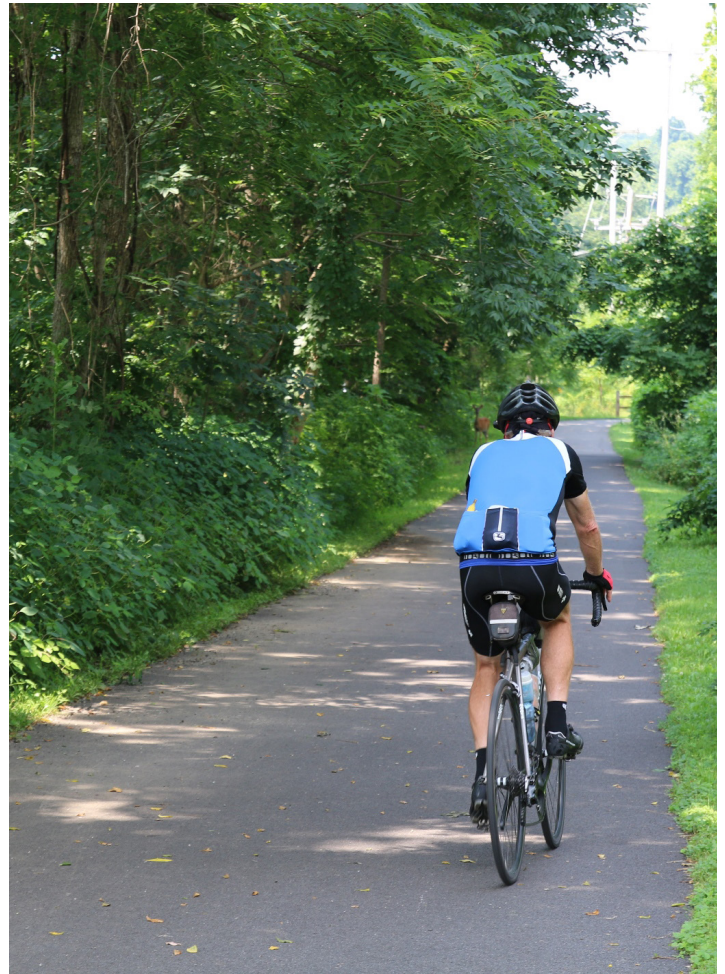
- Determine the vision, goals and objectives for pedestrians, bicyclists, and others in the study area and surrounding area, incorporating stakeholder feedback.

Preliminary Steps

- Identify a budget and potential funding sources to complete the Active Transportation Plan.
- Determine Responsible Body: Determine whether the governing body will oversee this process or if it will be delegated to the Planning Commission or a project task force.
- Technical Support: Determine if a consultant will be needed to support the development of the plan.

Identify Features to be Mapped

- Determine the most critical features to represent on the map. These features could already be documented on the municipality's Comprehensive Plan (i.e., existing pedestrian and bicycle networks).



The Chester County Active Transportation Plan (2020) reviews the existing Zoning and Subdivision and Land Development ordinances related to transportation in all 73 Chester County municipalities.

Landowner Outreach

- Engaging landowners, business owners and other community stakeholders early in the process is essential for promoting transparency, fostering a clear understanding of the process, and developing support for the plan's goals.
- Holding dedicated meetings with designated stakeholders and the public provides an opportunity for them to ask questions and fosters open dialogue between residents and the municipality, especially if such communication has not yet been established.

Public Review and Input

- This is not a stipulation of the MPC; therefore, a municipal planning commission can simply accept the plan. They do not need to follow the MPC's requirements for adoption with a 45-day review period, providing opportunity for County Planning Commission and surround municipal review.
- The Active Transportation Plan should be made available for public review prior to acceptance.

Acceptance

- The municipality is required to hold a Public Hearing prior to acceptance.
- If the Public Hearing does not lead to any changes or only minor corrections to the ordinance, the governing body can proceed with accepting the Active Transportation Plan, contingent on any minor corrections.
- Upon completion of the public hearing, the governing body may vote to accept the plan with a resolution. The resolution must be signed by the governing body.
- Within 30 days of acceptance, the plan and signed resolution must be sent to the surrounding municipalities.
- After adoption, the plan must be submitted to the county recorder of deeds within 60 days of acceptance.



Public and landowner input is essential for an effective Active Transportation Plan to understand needs of local residents.

Next Steps

- Amend ordinances to reflect and reference the Active Transportation Plan.
- Incorporate the goals of the Active Transportation Plan into the standard review process for Subdivision and Land Development applications and approvals.
- Upload the Active Transportation Plan in a prominent location within the Township's municipal offices, public meeting spaces, and on its website.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania - Department of Transportation Active Transportation Executive Summary and How-To Guide*
- *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania - Department of Transportation How-To Guide for Developing Active Transportation Plans*
- *U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration - How to Develop a Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Action Plan (2017)*