



MAKING IT EASIER to **WALK** and  
**BIKE** to RAIL STATIONS in the  
GREATER PHILADELPHIA REGION



## North Wales Strategic Planning Session

Meeting Notes and Next Steps

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### Background

DVRPC's Safe Routes to Transit Program is a competitive technical assistance grant program periodically offered to municipalities in Greater Philadelphia that are interested in enhancing pedestrian and bicycle access to transit stations. More information on this program is available at [www.dvrpc.org/saferoutestotransit](http://www.dvrpc.org/saferoutestotransit).

As part of this program, DVRPC facilitated a meeting with representatives from North Wales on March 15, 2019 to discuss pedestrian and bicycle access issues and opportunities around the North Wales Regional Rail Station. This memo summarizes the topics that were discussed at that meeting and presents strategies and resources that can help guide planning and development in the station area.

### Meeting Participants

- Betsy Mastaglio, DVRPC
- Joe Banks, DVRPC
- Joe Natale, DVRPC
- Andrew Svekla, DVRPC
- Derek Lombardi, DVRPC
- Missy Frankil, DVRPC
- Maggie Dobbs, Montgomery County Planning Commission
- Anne Leavitt-Gruberger, Montgomery County Planning Commission
- Andrew Besold, Montgomery County Planning Commission
- Brian Olszak, Montgomery County Planning Commission
- Marley Bice, Montgomery County Planning Commission
- Christine Hart, North Wales Borough
- Alan Guzzardo, North Wales Borough
- Ryan Judge, SEPTA

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### Station Access Considerations

Previous improvements including high-level platforms and expanded overflow parking have enhanced the role of North Wales Station as an asset to North Wales Borough, its residents, and nearby employers and retailers. However, the popularity of the station, the growth of business activity in the immediate

vicinity, and the future mixed-use transit-oriented development desired in the "Wawa Triangle" warrant greater efforts to protect and accommodate pedestrian and bicycle activity to and around the station.

Interventions should be focused on Walnut Street, as it is a key connector between downtown North Wales, the train station, and the "Wawa Triangle," and carries a bus route to other county destinations. A complete network of sidewalks and crosswalks linking the station to nearby residential neighborhoods would help the borough accomplish its walkability goals. Borough officials should work collaboratively with PennDOT contacts to address right-of-way access, phasing of sidewalks, sidewalk obstructions, and future sidewalk maintenance. They should work with property owners to address obstacles in the right of way and property access now and as properties redevelop. Secondary priorities include completing sidewalks on borough-owned Beaver Street, exploring reconfigured traffic patterns on Railroad Street, 5th Street, and 6th Street, designating bicycle routes, and improving passenger visibility and comfort at bus stops.

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## Next Steps

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### 1. Walnut Street Sidewalk:

- a. Determine right-of-way along the west side of Walnut Street and utilize the [Highway Occupancy Permit](#) (HOP) process if any improvements are proposed within PennDOT's right-of-way.
- b. Work with property owners, consult borough engineer/public works, and pursue borough funding for sidewalk installation. In many cases, the use of state or federal funds for a smaller-scale project result in longer timelines and higher costs for all phases (design, right-of-way, and construction).
- c. Consider installing wayfinding signage to the station in the event that new sidewalks along Walnut Street make it a preferred route compared to Beaver Street.

### 2. Walnut Street Crosswalk(s):

- a. Determine preferred location between 4th and 5th Streets to add an east-west crossing on Walnut Street.
- b. Work with PennDOT and SEPTA to determine any minimum legal distance separating train tracks from parallel crosswalks.
- c. Coordinate with PennDOT, consult borough engineer/public works, and pursue borough funding for crosswalk installation, including desired signage and signalization. PennDOT would provide any necessary maintenance documentation.

### 3. Beaver Street Sidewalk(s):

- a. Work with property owner on an agreement to move the shed blocking sight lines and allow the borough to construct sidewalk in its existing right-of-way.
  - i. If necessary, explore acquiring a portion of the property or developing a sidewalk easement designed to promote public safety. The attached map shows that this stretch of Beaver Street saw multiple crashes in a five-year span, indicating the hazardous conditions for all road users.

- b. Work with adjacent property owners, consult borough engineer/public works, and pursue borough funding for sidewalk installation on the east (northbound) side of Beaver Street.
- c. Collaborate with Upper Gwynedd Township officials and the two landowners to the northwest of the Wawa Triangle to gauge interest in and willingness to extend sidewalk along the west (southbound) side of Beaver Street. This has potential to be an attractive alternate route for pedestrians if sight line and safety issues on the northbound side cannot be resolved, since it would connect the station to the existing crosswalk at Wawa.

**4. Local Road Directional Analysis:**

- a. Conduct roadway study as outlined in the borough's comprehensive plan to determine the feasibility and desirability of converting the direction of travel on certain local roads to improve the efficiency of traffic flow and reduce vehicle-pedestrian conflicts. In particular, Railroad Street could be converted from bidirectional to one-way northbound with angled parking, and 5th and 6th Streets could be reversed between E. Montgomery Avenue and Walnut Street.
- b. Engage residents and property owners to educate them about the potential benefits and gauge support.
- c. Pursue council approval and project implementation from borough engineer/public works.

**5. Designated Bicycle Routes:**

- a. Consider neighborhood greenways on low-volume local roads. The county's 2018 [Bike Montco](#) plan includes Walnut Street in its recommended bicycle network. As a minor arterial, suggested facilities include a bicycle lane, paved shoulder, or wide outside lane. However, the narrow width of Walnut Street through the borough means alternate routes may be more desirable. The streets listed below are good candidates for "neighborhood greenways," or designated cycling routes between the station, downtown North Wales, and neighboring residential areas. Also known as bicycle boulevards and neighborhood bikeways, neighborhood greenways use a variety of treatments, including pavement markings and signage, to decrease traffic volumes and speed and provide a low-stress environment for bicyclists and pedestrians. Signage that can be used to denote bicycle-friendly streets is described in [Chapter 9B of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices \(MUTCD\)](#). Bicycle Guide Signs are specifically addressed in [Section 9B.20](#).
  - i. School Street, between N. Main Street and the SEPTA parking lot entrance
  - ii. E. Montgomery Avenue, between S. Main Street and 10th Street
  - iii. 5th and 6th Streets, between Walnut Street and E. Montgomery Avenue
- b. Consult borough engineer/public works as necessary, and pursue borough funding for installation.

- c. Coordinate with Upper Gwynedd Township officials to ensure connections with any planned routes outside of the borough.
6. **Bus Stop Improvements:**
- a. Identify locations where new bus shelters and/or benches may be appropriate based on ridership and/or available space. Review [SEPTA's Bus Stop Design Guidelines](#) to help guide decisions.
  - b. Because SEPTA does not own or maintain bus shelters, the borough will need to identify potential funding and maintenance strategies to install their own bus shelters.

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## Planning Resources

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- [Park and Ride Passenger Origins Web Map](#): This interactive map can help guide station area planning by showing where passengers who park and ride are driving from. The map indicates that many passengers parked at North Wales Station originate in neighborhoods within three miles of the station, which is a widely accepted distance for bicycle commuters to access public transportation.
- [Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center](#): The PBIC aims to improve the quality of life in communities by increasing opportunities for safe walking and bicycling as a viable means of transportation and physical activity. The [PBIC library](#) includes sample pedestrian and bicycle plans and planning tools, design guidelines, research and safety studies, articles and white papers, case studies, and links to presentations, videos, and other web resources.
- [Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress \(LTS\) and Connectivity Analysis](#): The LTS tool can help determine the suitability of different roads for bike facility implementation. The LTS classification ranges from 1 (relaxing, suitable for children) to 4 (high traffic stress, multilane fast traffic). This tool shows which roads are good candidates to be made more comfortable for cycling and could connect “islands” of more comfortable routes. These roads—which include Walnut and Beaver Streets—are particularly good candidates for bike facilities due to their ability to connect currently separated parts of town.
- [NACTO Urban Bikeway Design Guide](#): The National Association of City Transportation Officials' Urban Bikeway Design Guide includes extensive recommendations regarding signing and marking safe bike routes that help to inform and instruct all road users. Subsections specifically address shared lane markings and wayfinding signage.
- More information about neighborhood greenways can be found in DVRPC's [Identifying Neighborhood Greenway Possibilities in Philadelphia](#). To discuss neighborhood greenway treatments that may be appropriate in North Wales, please contact Cassidy Boulan at [cboulan@dvrpc.org](mailto:cboulan@dvrpc.org) or 215-238-2832.
- [Suburban Retail Districts Web Map](#): This interactive tool compiles information about strong suburban retail centers in the DVRPC region. As borough officials work to support the station area's transition to more transit-oriented uses, they can look here to identify peer municipalities

and what conditions influence their land use and transportation system, including sidewalk width, streetscape, events, and tenant mix.

- [DVRPC's Municipal Funding Resource](#): This online database is intended to assist local governments, community groups, and non-profit organizations in identifying federal, state, regional, county, and private sources of funding for locally initiated planning and development projects.
  - Though lower cost projects with small footprints are typically not competitive for [CMAQ](#), the [Multi-Modal Fund](#), and [Transportation Alternatives](#), these sources are often utilized for pedestrian and bicycle facilities and improvements.
  - Nonprofit and advocacy groups often seed small walkability projects with microgrants, including [America Walks](#) and [AARP](#). The [PBIC](#) also provides examples of non-government funding sources.

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## Helpful Contacts

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### *PennDOT*

- Fran Hanney: [fhanney@pa.gov](mailto:fhanney@pa.gov); 610-205-6560

### *DVRPC*

- Andrew Svekla: [asvekla@dvrpc.org](mailto:asvekla@dvrpc.org); 215-238-2810
- Betsy Mastaglio: [bmastaglio@dvrpc.org](mailto:bmastaglio@dvrpc.org); 215-238-2812