LEHIGH VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
Thursday, June 24, 2021 at 7:00 PM
Via Microsoft Teams

AGENDA


Roll Call

Courtesy of Floor

Chairman’s Report

1. Walter Scheiber Leadership Award, by the National Association of Regional Councils (GZ)

Minutes

1. ACTION ITEM: Minutes and Review of Roll Call Actions of the May 27, 2021 Commission Meeting (JW)

Comprehensive Planning Committee:

1. ACTION ITEM: Comprehensive Planning Committee Summary Sheet (SS)
2. INFORMATION ITEM: WITHDRAWN - Chapman Borough – Sketch/Feasibility Plan – Review under County Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (BB)

Environment Committee:

1. ACTION ITEM: A Regional Climate Action Assessment Draft Review and Presentation (GR, BB)
2. ACTION ITEM: Committee Summary Report (GR)

Transportation Committee:

1. ACTION ITEM: Street Vacation Review for West Sycamore Street from North Brick to West Allen Street in the City of Allentown (BB, BH)
2. INFORMATION ITEMS: Transportation Alternatives Set Aside (TASA) and PENNDOT Multimodal Programs
   a. Contracted TASA and PENNDOT Multimodal Projects and Status (BB)
   b. TASA Project Awards and Roll Advancing FutureLV: The Regional Plan, Walk/RollLV: Active Transportation Plan and Northampton County Livable Landscapes Plan (BB)
Old Business:
1. INFORMATION ITEMS: Activity Reports:
   b. Highway Traffic Monitoring (BH)

New Business:
1. INFORMATION ITEM: RAISE Grant Application for Riverside Drive (TO)

Executive Director’s Report:
1. INFORMATION ITEMS: Good News (BB)
   a. Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia Reinventing our Communities Program Fellow, Jill Seitz

Communications, Public Engagement and Participation:
1. INFORMATION ITEM: Morning Call Business Cycle Column (MA)
2. INFORMATION ITEM: Morning Call Op-Ed Column (MA)
3. INFORMATION ITEM: Monthly, Plan Lehigh Valley Talk Show on WDIY, Lehigh Valley Public Radio, 88.1! (MA)
4. INFORMATION ITEMS: Engagement and Participation (MA)
   a. Transformative Talk
      The Hot House: The Region’s Residential Burn, Blister & Bloom
      i. June 25 @ 8:30 am via Microsoft Teams
      ii. Link: http://tiny.cc/TT0625
      iii. Phone: 610-477-5793, Conference ID:193 138 807#
   b. Local Technical Assistance Program Classes
      i. July 12th 8-11:00 am Roadside Vegetation Control (day one of two)
      ii. July 13th 8-11:00 am Roadside Vegetation Control (day two of two)
         1. Register for classes on the LTAP website gis.penndot.gov/ltap/ or call 800-FOR-LTAP
   c. Joint WorkshopLV: Multimodal and WorkshopLV Freight, to kick-off the Transportation Safety Plan Update
      i. July 21st @ 4 pm via Microsoft Teams
      ii. Via Web: http://tiny.cc/WK0721
      iii. Via the phone 610-477-5793, Conference ID: 352 010 579#

Next Lehigh Valley Planning Commission Meeting:
Thursday, July 22nd @ 7:00 pm
Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the LVPC held a virtual public meeting on May 27, 2021. The meeting was advertised in the Lehigh Valley Press on December 28, 2020.

Mr. Zebrowski chaired the meeting.

Ms. Winton took Roll Call.

Members in Attendance:

**Lehigh County**
Mr. Brace, Mr. Dougherty, Mr. Elbich, Mr. Gibson, Mr. Glickman, Mr. Harakal, Mr. Herman, Mr. Lightner, Mr. Molchany, Ms. Moore, Mr. O’Neil, Ms. Rader, and Mr. Repasch

**Northampton County**
Mr. Amato, Ms. Davis, Ms. Dreisbach, Mr. Andrew Elliott, Mr. Charles Elliott, Mr. Lott, Ms. Lawless, Mr. Manges, Mr. McGee, Mr. Melnick, Ms. Pearson, Ms. Smith, and Greg Zebrowski

Members Absent:

**Lehigh County**
Executive Armstrong, Ms. Gerlach, Ms. Johnson, Ms. Morgan, Mr. Seigel and Mr. Schmidt.

**Northampton County**
Ms. Connolly, Mr. Donchez, Ms. Heller, Executive McClure, Mr. McGorry, Mr. O’Connell, Mr. Panto, Ms. Rutzler and Mr. Yob.

Staff Present: Mr. Assad, Ms. Bradley, Mr. Hite, Mr. Reese, Ms. Seitz, Ms. Smith, Mr. Okumu and Ms. Winton.

Public Present: Jeff Ward, Charles Arlington Cole, Omar Ray, and Diane Kelley

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR
There were no speakers during this section.

CHAIRMAN’S REPORT
Mr. Zebrowski provided an insightful response to the New York Times article headlined “A New Crop in Pennsylvania Warehouses”.

MINUTES
Mr. Zebrowski stated that the minutes of the April 22, 2021 LVPC meeting are attached. Ms. Moore made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Dougherty seconded the motion. Ms. Rader abstained from the vote and the motion passed.
Comprehensive Planning Committee:

1. **ACTION ITEM: Forks Township – Land Use of Regional Significance – 600 Kuebler Road**

Ms. Smith detailed the application which is considered a Land Use of Regional Significance under *FutureLV* as a 'major redevelopment', proposing to construct a 220,100-square-foot warehouse on 17.95 acres. The existing site includes a 174,547-square-foot manufacturing facility that will be demolished. This proposal, located at 600 Kuebler Road, is in a Preservation Buffer of the General Land Use Plan and within a High Preservation Priority Area of the Farmland Preservation Plan. The Preservation Buffer is an area that may have factors available to accommodate additional development but where additional scrutiny is warranted in determining whether growth can be accommodated. Those factors considered, the proposal is a redevelopment project, utilizing an area already used for industrial purposes and relieving development pressure on agricultural and natural lands (of Policy 1.1). For these reasons, the proposal is generally consistent with *FutureLV*. Pedestrian, bicycle, ADA, transit, vehicle mobility, landscaping and green infrastructure and building recommendations were made to make the plan more consistent. Mr. Melnick asked if there were any questions or comments. Mr. Elbich made a motion to approve the staff’s comments. Ms. Dreisbach seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

2. **ACTION ITEM: Upper Mount Bethel Township – Land Use of Regional Significance – 303 Demi Road Planned Industrial Park**

Ms. Seitz detailed the project which proposes a 420,000-square-foot logistics center and associated site improvements at 303 Demi Road. The site is located at the terminating point of Demi Road, accessible via River Road. It is adjacent to the southeast border of Portland Borough and approximately one quarter of a mile away from PA Route 611, connecting south to Route 512 and the Lehigh Valley and the Portland-Columbia Toll Bridge, connecting north into New Jersey. The proposed project, while strategically located, is pivotal to the long-term viability of the Township and poses substantial impacts to Township character, infrastructure and quality of life if left unmitigated. The project has the potential to be consistent with *FutureLV*, however, the project location is not within an area with available or planned transportation capacity. The Township is discouraged from approving land development plans that have freight impacts, without the existing infrastructure to support it. Additionally, the development is proposed to be served by on-lot sewer utilities, eliminating the possibility that this development and any future developments in the vicinity may be used for manufacturing. Infrastructure improvements will need to be coordinated between Portland Borough (sewer and water), PENNDOT for a portion of Demi Road and connections to other state facilities, the Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission, County, and others in order for this development to protect the public, health, safety, and welfare and not unnecessarily burden taxpayers in the short and long run. Without public sewer and water, higher quality and compensated manufacturing jobs are unlikely to be created, and the site will be relegated to warehousing and logistics only. Design of pedestrian facilities, green infrastructure and building design where also discussed and included in the review letter. Specifically, Mr. Melnick strongly stressed the environmental impacts of the project. Ms. Lawless made comments regarding the traffic impact studies being incomplete, inadequate,
and misleading. Mr. Zebrowski added that the developer did not do their due diligence with regards to the community. Mr. Amato asked if there are any comments regarding the subsurface geology. Mr. Glickman asked the relative elevation of the site to the river and the height of the building? Ms. Seitz indicated it is 45 feet high. Mr. Glickman asked if there are provisions regarding changing use and is there another chance to review. Ms. Bradley indicted that, unless there is a significant change, we do not get another chance to review per the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code. Additionally, the LVPC met with PennDOT, the Township, County and others as partner engagement on this project and express concerns and opportunities related to the site and proposed development. Mr. Cole is a resident in Upper Mount Bethel Township and this project is taking 10 acres on steep slopes and should not be approved that the project is short-sighted on all items; water, wastewater, the roads, and everything. He is not opposed to development, but it should be developed carefully taking the into account the residents and area with a thoughtful process. Mr. Zebrowski asked if there were any questions. Ms. Lawless added if a comment can be added after the section on Page 3, of the letter, indicating that should be an area and need a revised traffic impact statement and study. Mr. Melnick made a motion to approve the staff’s comments, as amended. Mr. Harakal seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

3. **ACTION ITEM: Riverside Drive – Implementation Plan – Phase 1**
Ms. Samantha Smith detailed subject application which proposes construction of a new road, called Riverside Drive. It includes 3,750 linear feet of new roadway and multimodal improvements. The proposal is located along the abandoned railroad right-of-way between Liberty and Union Streets. The proposal is located in a Development area of the General Land Use Plan and is consistent with *FutureLV: The Regional Plan* because it will enhance multimodal connections to Hamilton Street and future Lehigh and Northampton Transportation Authority (LANTA) bus rapid transit service by establishing a mixed-transportation corridor. The proposal also serves to increase the social, economic, and environmental well-being of the region. In addition, this phase of the Riverside Drive Implementation Plan is a designated Commuter Trail on the *FutureLV* Transportation Plan, which serves to ‘encourage an interconnected street network. The proposal includes the ‘Hamilton Gateway’ element and a portion of the ‘Allentown Riverfront Redevelopment’ element of the Riverside Drive Multimodal Revitalization Corridor project, which envisions an ultimate connection from the City of Allentown to Whitehall Township, and most significantly closes a substantial gap in the Delaware & Lehigh (D&L) National Heritage Corridor in one of the region’s neighborhoods with the least access to opportunity. Mr. Melnick asked if there were any questions or comments. Mr. Molchany made a comment that this project has been formally vetted for several years and the developer has done a great job. He believes the project will benefit the entire Lehigh Valley! Mr. Zebrowski asked if there were any other questions or comments. Mr. Molchany made a motion to approve. Mr. Harakal seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

4. **ACTION ITEM: Comprehensive Planning Committee Summary Sheet**
Mr. Melnick detailed the Comprehensive Planning Committee Summary Sheet and asked if there were any questions or comments. Hearing none, Mr. Zebrowski asked for a motion to
accept the summary sheet. Ms. Dreisbach made a motion to approve. Mr. Lightner seconded the motion. Ms. Rader abstained from the Upper Macungie item and the motion was approved.

5. Commission Training on Northampton County Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance by Solicitor Gary Asteak

Ms. Bradley detailed that a feasibility sketch plan was received by Chapman Borough and because the Borough does not have their own Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO), then the adopted county SALDO applies. The LVPC, as the county planning agency, is responsible for reviewing. We are serving as the professional staff for the Borough. Only four communities in the Lehigh Valley defer to the LVPC those are: Slatington, West Easton, Glendon and Chapman. Mr. Gary Asteak serves as Chapman Borough Solicitor and will be Special Council for this project. Mr. Asteak detailed the Commissioner’s role and obligations in the feasibility review stage of the process. Mr. Repasch asked if a municipality can reverse their SALDO and rely on the LVPC? Mr. Asteak said “yes”, if a municipality repealed their SALDO then the LVPC would step in but cannot image that happening. There was then a discussion on the four communities and their responsibilities. Mr. Zebrowski asked if there are any questions or comments, hearing none he thanked Mr. Asteak for his time.

Environment Committee:

1. Committee Summary Report

Mr. Repasch detailed the Environment Committee’s meeting on May 25th including the Trexler nature Preserve Master Site Plan, Metropolitan Area Planning Forum Resiliency Working Group and Regional Climate Action Assessment and ClimateLV along with the LVPC application to the Pennsylvania Department of Environment Protection Local Climate Action Program and, if accepted, will support a regional greenhouse gas inventory among other planning.

Transportation Committee:

1. Action Item: Bethlehem Street Vacation – Luna Street and unopened part of Bushkill Street

Mr. Okumu detailed the proposed street vacation was submitted by the City on behalf of Mr. Michael and Gretchen Devers of 2006 Renwick Street, Bethlehem, 18107, through their attorney for portions of Luna Street and unopened Bushkill Street. The owner’s property is located on address 129 Luna Street. The proposed plan, submitted for recommendations under Section 304 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, was reviewed for general consistency with the intent of FutureLV: The Regional Plan and found generally consistent with conditions. Mr. Molchany suggested that that an easement for emergency services will be added to the letter. Mr. Herman made a motion to approve the revised letter. Mr. Repasch seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

Old Business:

1. INFORMATION ITEMS: Activity Reports:

Ms. Bradley reviewed the development activity for April another very busy month with 67 reviews, 16 subdivisions, 30 development (the highest this year) 17 Stormwater & 4 Municipal Ordinances and Maps.
b. COVID-19 Pandemic Highway Traffic Monitoring
Mr. Hite detailed the total vehicle traffic as well as total truck traffic for the month of April.

Communications, Public Engagement and Participation:
Mr. Assad detailed the many ways you can be informed of what is happening in the region. Including The Morning Call Business Cycle Column and WDIY, Lehigh Valley Public Radio Monthly. Or to be involved you can attend Local Technical Assistance Program on June 9th, Workshop Environment on June 10th, Transformative Talk – Housing on June 25th and the Joint WorkshopLV Multimodal and Workshop LV Freight on July 21st.

ADJOURNMENT
Mr. Zebrowski stated that the next LVPC meeting is set to be virtual on June 24, 2021. Mr. Zebrowski asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting; Mr. Molchany made a motion to adjourn, and the meeting was adjourned.

Submitted by:
Jennifer Winton, Executive Secretary
### Project Review Summary Sheet

#### Comprehensive Planning Committee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Brief Statement of Purpose</th>
<th>LVPC Comment</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive Plan Update</td>
<td>Hellertown Borough and Lower Saucon Township</td>
<td><em>Saucon Valley 2020 Comprehensive Plan Update</em> – an update to the multi-municipal plan adopted in 2009 that also includes the Saucon Valley School District.</td>
<td>Exhibits consistency with <em>FutureLV</em>—Efficiently ‘coordinates land use decisions across municipal boundaries’ (of Policy 1.4) with commitment to ‘encourage reuse, sustainable building, site design and community design practices’ (of Policy 3.4).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoning Ordinance and Map Amendment</td>
<td>Bath Borough</td>
<td><em>Miscellaneous C-H2 Commercial Highway Zoning Ordinance and Related Map Amendments</em> – amends the C-H2 Commercial Highway Zoning District uses, changes requirements for ‘garden apartments’ and ‘multi-family dwellings’, and amends the Zoning map to correlate with limited residential in the District</td>
<td>This minor proposal is a matter of local concern and exhibits consistency with <em>FutureLV: The Regional Plan</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zoning Ordinance Amendment</td>
<td>Bangor Borough</td>
<td><em>Industrial/Commercial (IC) Zoning District and Administration</em> – addition of various conditional uses and related regulations within the IC Zoning District and reinforces compliance other Borough Ordinances</td>
<td>Exhibits consistency with <em>FutureLV</em> – Establishes ‘an efficient development process that is responsive to community needs’ (of Policy 1.4), and takes a proactive approach in ‘protecting the health, safety and welfare of the public’ (Policy 3.2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoning Ordinance Amendment</td>
<td>Plainfield Township</td>
<td><em>Additional Requirements for Warehouse, Wholesale, Storage and Distribution Uses</em> – adds requirements for site location, environmental and transportation impact studies, minimum truck parking spaces, truck driver amenities, snow removal and idling and noise restrictions</td>
<td>Exhibits consistency with <em>FutureLV</em> – Demonstrates commitment to municipal consideration of the global effects of new or expanded freight businesses (of Policy 2.4) and ‘support evolution and adaptability of government’ (of Policy 1.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoning and Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance Amendment</td>
<td>Salisbury Township</td>
<td><em>Miscellaneous</em> – Amendments provide modernization and clarification and eliminate redundancies</td>
<td>This minor proposal is a matter of local concern and exhibits consistency with <em>FutureLV</em>.</td>
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Phillips Armstrong, County Executive

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Introduction

The Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC) has a long history of planning for and promoting the protection of the natural environment. The LVPC’s sister organization, the Lehigh Valley Transportation Study (LVTS), for decades has focused on reducing transportation-related emissions, protecting endangered species, floodplains and other environmental assets, as a means to improving safety. As the region grows, striking a balance of development while protecting the environment becomes increasingly critical to maintaining the region’s high quality of life. Through numerous studies, plans and model regulations, the LVPC supports and reinforces the importance of environmental and climate resiliency throughout Lehigh and Northampton counties.

Climate change presents an unprecedented challenge to global environments, including posing a serious threat to the Lehigh Valley. Over the last decade, the region has experienced more intense storms, higher rainfall amounts, increased flooding, less snow and rising temperatures. We can expect these trends to continue with an increase in severity and frequency. Climate change mitigation and adaptation to these impacts will affect nearly every aspect of the Lehigh Valley’s economy, health and natural environment.

Climate change planning is critical for Lehigh and Northampton counties and each of the 62 local municipalities. Initial climate action planning efforts are underway for Allentown, Bethlehem and Easton, which represent a significant portion of the existing urban environment and “carbon footprint” associated with buildings and public infrastructure. Gaining a complete understanding of each community’s impact on climate change is a significant technical and financial undertaking. Greenhouse gas inventories, or GHG’s, identify emissions that amplify the “greenhouse effect” in the atmosphere to trigger global warming. These emissions are associated with the burning of fossil fuels (oil, natural gas and coal) for heating, transportation, manufacturing and electricity generation, among other uses. A complete greenhouse gas inventory needs to identify the emissions under the control of the local government (heating and lighting buildings, fleet vehicles, providing utilities and municipal services), the purchase of electricity, steam, heat or cooling by municipalities and from emissions not directly under government control, such as employee commuting. Once greenhouse gas emissions are defined, a climate action plan defines the specific actions the local government can take to mitigate the emissions. Many local governments may not possess the technical or financial means to accomplish a greenhouse gas inventory or climate action plan. This is where climate action planning at the county and Lehigh Valley scale can benefit each local government within the region. A first step in the process is to establish a regional foundation in climate action planning that already exists through the various plans adopted by the LVPC, LVTS and Lehigh and Northampton counties.

The LVPC’s existing plans explicitly address climate change through policies and actions. More broadly, however, the LVPC and LVTS plans promote principles of smart growth, economic savings, natural resource protection, green infrastructure and sustainability, among others, that further reinforce climate change mitigation and adaptation.

In fact, the counties, along with the LVPC and LVTS, took a leadership role in preparing for climate change in 2014 when, using a U.S. Housing and Urban Development Grant, participated...
with a consortium of 16 government, quasi-government and non-profit organizations from around the region to set policy needed to build sustainable communities. The Policies and Actions in the Climate + Energy Element would become the climate change foundation for FutureLV: The Regional Plan, the Lehigh and Northampton counties’ Livable Landscapes plans and the Walk/Roll LV Active Transportation plan to follow. The American Planning Association (APA) Policy Guide on Planning & Climate Change was extensively used to inform LVPC and LVTS policy identified within the Climate + Energy Element. To more broadly evaluate the respective plans for climate action, we’ve gone back to the APA guide to fully extract the direct climate implications of LVPC, LVTS and county policy expressed in the four documents adopted after the Climate + Energy Element set the standard.

Climate action is a continuous thread through foundational plans of the LVPC, LVTS and Lehigh and Northampton counties. The plans include:

**Climate + Energy Element** — The LVPC’s Climate + Energy Element (2014) provides an overview of climate change and energy use and projects their impacts on Pennsylvania’s water resources, aquatic ecosystems, forests, agriculture, human health and the economy. Climate change can have far-reaching effects, both positive and negative, on plant and animal ecosystems, biodiversity and various aspects of society, including human health, where people can live, the types of crops that can be grown and the economy. Within this element, the American Planning Association (APA) Policy Guide on Planning and Climate Change was utilized in the development of goals, policies and actions that can be effective in helping the region mitigate and adapt to climate change. The 10 overarching Climate + Energy Element goals that served as the foundation for the four future plans are:

- Protect, conserve and enhance natural ecosystems to provide long-term resilience to climate change.
- Protect public infrastructure from potentially harmful impacts associated with climate change.
- Protect residents, property and critical facilities from natural hazards as evolving over time due to climate change.
- Create a land use pattern that helps to mitigate climate change impacts through a compact urban development area, mixed land uses, higher densities in urban areas and through preserving land for agricultural and environmental purposes.
- Provide building and site design practices that help to mitigate climate change impacts.
- Reduce Lehigh Valley greenhouse gas emissions from residents, government and businesses.
- Promote energy efficiency and natural resource conservation within existing and new buildings and land development.
- Encourage alternatives to automobile use, both motorized and non-motorized.
- Support the diversification of energy sources.
- Advocate increased energy conservation and efficiency awareness.

**FutureLV: The Regional Plan**, combining the state-mandated regional comprehensive plan with the federal-mandated Long-Range Transportation Plan, sets the vision and direction to
carry the Lehigh Valley to 2045 and beyond. This plan provides a blueprint for managing future growth, making the most of our assets, and promoting a region where everyone has access to health, opportunity and a livable neighborhood. It also represents the investment strategy for our transportation infrastructure to meet current and future needs, manage transportation-related emissions, improve transportation infrastructure resiliency and create options for non-automobile trips.

*Walk/RollLV: Active Transportation Plan* also works in partnership within the broader structure of the Long Range Transportation Plan in coordinating public transit, trail, sidewalk, bikeway and roadway systems to create a seamless regional transportation network that is safe and convenient. This plan promotes a multimodal transportation network that helps to achieve the region’s health, safety, mobility, air quality, quality of life, recreation, tourism and environmental goals.

*Livable Landscapes – A Park, Recreation, Open Space, Agricultural, and Historic Lands Plan for Lehigh County and Livable Landscapes – An* Open Space Plan for Northampton County guides the conservation, restoration and enhancements of the counties’ open space, cultural and natural resources.

Each of these plans contain a framework which broadly builds climate action throughout their many Goals, Policies and Actions. While it is not always explicitly defined as related to climate action, many of the plan’s outcomes and overarching goals encourage climate mitigation and adaptation techniques throughout the region. To identify the full breadth of climate policy and action incorporated within these plans, each of them were analyzed for their relationship to the recommended climate strategies in the American Planning Association’s (APA) Policy Guide on Planning & Climate Change. The APA Climate policies are organized into sectors that include local roles, land use, transportation, energy, green development, natural resources, economic development, hazards management, public health and public infrastructure. Under each of the plan’s broadly defined goals, 86% of *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*, 74% of Lehigh County’s *Livable Landscapes*...
Plan, 83% of Northampton County’s Livable Landscapes Plan and 100% of Walk/RollLV is associated with an APA Climate Change Policy. In total, 525 Goals, Policies, Actions and Strategies from the four different plans relate to climate action.

The APA policies most represented in the combined analysis of the four plans were natural asset protection, green infrastructure, a compact development form, agricultural land uses and practices, and local street network and design. These are all foundation concepts of Climate Action. The most represented APA policies in the four plans combined are shown in the included figure as the largest phrases in the word cloud. The APA Climate Change Policies that associated with a Goal, Policy or Action from the plans are displayed, with the size of the phrase depicting its relative number of occurrences.

The results of each individual plan’s climate analysis produced a distinct set of APA policies that were the most represented within each plan. In reality, all of the Lehigh Valley plans had elements of virtually all of the APA Policies, but to better quantify the climate action content in the regional plans, we chose to focus on the top five APA Policies represented by the Goals, Policies or Actions covered in each of these four plans. Collectively across the four plans, a total of 11 APA Policies were among the top five as associated to the Goals, Policies or Actions of the plans. We’ve listed those below, along with the Lehigh Valley plans in which those policies served as an underpinning foundation for the plan. As the regional plan that sets the vision and direction for the Lehigh Valley through 2045 and beyond, FutureLV is represented within every APA climate policy listed.
Policy Assessment
Natural Asset Protection

*FutureLV, Lehigh County Livable Landscapes, Northampton County Livable Landscapes*

Protecting important natural assets such as open space, wetlands and forests, is essential because they enhance long-term resilience to climate change impacts and serve as “carbon sinks” to sequester carbon from the atmosphere. *FutureLV: The Regional Plan* holds a ‘conservation first’ perspective that values High Conservation Priority Natural Resource Areas over other land use recommendations. Lehigh and Northampton counties’ Livable Landscapes plans recognize the many benefits of an open space network and promote the protection of natural areas, working farms, scenic resources, and vibrant communities interconnected with parks, greenways and trails. Ideas or recommendations related to natural asset protection were the most identified throughout *FutureLV* and reinforced in 27 of its Policies, Actions or Land Use Plans. Policies 1.3 and 3.1 of *FutureLV* reinforce the Lehigh Valley’s commitment to conserving and preserving priority natural, historic, cultural, scenic, and agricultural assets for environmental and recreational benefits. Goal 1 in both Lehigh and Northampton counties’ *Livable Landscapes* plans specifically aims to conserve, restore and enhance natural resources, and include policies that implement Lehigh and Northampton counties’ commitment to preserving and protecting high conservation priority natural resource areas, wetlands, woodlands, core habitats and waterways.
Compact Development Form

*FutureLV, Lehigh County Livable Landscapes, Northampton County Livable Landscapes*

Through sustainability, smart growth and the promotion of walkable neighborhoods, planners have recognized the many advantages of a more compact development form. Increased density helps lower greenhouse gas emissions associated with buildings and transportation networks by reducing vehicle miles traveled. The increased density of a compact development form helps preserve land for agricultural, forestry and environmental uses. *FutureLV* includes 16 Policies, Actions or Special Sections related to the idea of creating a more compact development form. At the heart of *FutureLV* is a “Center and Corridors” concept that directs virtually all new development to the 57 activity Centers where people live, work and shop in the Lehigh Valley, and the transportation Corridors that connect them. An increased density in Centers and Corridors will increase activity and vibrancy within the communities, while also enhancing the region’s resiliency to climate change. For example, under Lehigh and Northampton counties’ *Livable Landscapes* Goal 6, implementation strategies include ensuring land acquired for open space is not converted to other uses.
Agricultural Land Uses and Practices

*FutureLV, Lehigh County Livable Landscapes, Northampton County Livable Landscapes*

With the Lehigh Valley’s extensive agricultural economy, farming is key to the region’s identity and environment. Agricultural land uses and associated practices, such as conservation tillage, managing livestock waste and forest preservation, represent important carbon sequestration opportunities. Additionally, agricultural land creates a strong market for local foods and products that reduce how far food must be transported to the dining table, which consequently reduces greenhouse gas emissions. *FutureLV* includes 19 Policies, Actions or Special Sections related to agricultural land uses and practices, and eight are related to local food climate initiatives. The actions in *FutureLV* Policies 3.3 and 4.4 encourage the preservation of farmland to provide open space and support agriculture as an essential component of the regional economy and rural character. Lehigh and Northampton Counties’ *Livable Landscapes Plan* Goal 4 is to preserve farmland and farming to meet food production, economic and open space needs. Its policies encourage the purchase of agricultural easements in areas recommended for farmland preservation and the implementation of best management practices on farms.

![](image) Lehigh County Farmland.
The Protection of Agricultural Lands from Urban/Suburban Encroachment

*FutureLV, Lehigh County Livable Landscapes, Northampton County Livable Landscapes*

Protecting agricultural lands from urban and suburban encroachment by development will minimize the conversion of farmland and woodland, increases carbon sequestration opportunities, supports the local economy and retains rural character. In total, ideas of protecting agricultural lands from urban/suburban encroachment were found in Lehigh and Northampton counties’ *Livable Landscapes plans* Goals, Policies or Actions. Specific policies in Goal 5 aim to reduce impacts of development in rural communities to retain the rural character of the Counties, as well as Goal 4, which includes protecting agricultural uses from residential development and non-farm activities that interfere with normal farming practices. Within *FutureLV*, Policy 1.1 aims to preserve natural areas and farmland by managing growth and development to enhance and strengthen cities, boroughs, suburbs and rural communities.
Green Infrastructure

*FutureLV, Lehigh County Livable Landscapes, Northampton County Livable Landscapes*

Green infrastructure refers to an interconnected network of open spaces and natural areas, often used to manage stormwater and improve water quality. Examples include urban forests, parks, green roofs, natural drainage systems and low impact development. When communities utilize and enhance their natural environmental assets as an integral part of their infrastructure, they can reduce their impact on climate change and increase their ability to adapt to changes that may occur. Lehigh and Northampton counties’ *Livable Landscapes* includes many Goals, Policies and Actions that emphasize green infrastructure improvements throughout Lehigh and Northampton counties. Specifically, Goal 3 promotes the conservation, restoration and enhancement of a greenways and blueways network, and Policies under Goal 1 emphasize the preservation of floodplains and riparian buffers to maintain their environmental value. Within *FutureLV*, the Canal Trail Concept specifically employs green infrastructure as an important part of reducing environmental impacts from stormwater and development. For example, constructing wetlands and rain gardens will help to clean and manage future stormwater, creating new habitats and improving the beauty of communities.
Integration of Land Use Planning and Transportation

*FutureLV, Northampton County Livable Landscapes, Lehigh County Livable Landscapes, Walk/RollLV*

Incorporating planning for transit, bicycle and pedestrian networks within local and regional comprehensive planning can encourage development patterns that support multimodal transportation networks, complete streets and reduced trip lengths, as well as preserving open space, agricultural land and providing convenient trail networks. Through supportive land use-transportation decisions, the ability for residents to choose non-automobile travel modes for their trips reduces the amount of greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles. By closely integrating the planning for land uses and all forms of transportation, communities can make these transportation choices more realistic and desirable for residents. Within the APA Transportation and Land Use sectors, ideas relating to the integration of transportation with land use planning were found in many *Walk/RollLV* Recommendations and Strategies. Specifically, the recommendation within *Walk/RollLV* of Pedestrian-Supportive Land Use Regulation and Development Review includes how land use regulation and the development review processes strongly influence the pedestrian-friendliness of the region. In Lehigh and Northampton Counties’ Livable Landscapes Plan, Goal 2 specifically aims to provide and maintain an exemplary park, trail and recreation system. Goal 2 includes policies that support using existing linear corridors for bicycle and pedestrian facilities, as well as encouraging trail linkage to create a network connecting residential areas, schools, parks, town centers, employment areas and other transportation facilities. Within *FutureLV*, Policy 2.1 supports the development of a mixed-transportation network that supports a more compact development pattern, optimizes roadway capacity and encourages alternative travel options. A mixed-transportation network and the creation of a compact development form coordinate land use and transportation decisions.
Local Street Network and Design

*FutureLV, Walk/RollLV*

Local street networks and complete streets encourage active transportation and provide easy connections to a variety of destinations that enable transportation choice, increased mobility, and a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. Mixed-transportation corridors are designed to accommodate all users and multiple transportation modes, including walking and biking. Street design that includes right-of-way for existing or future transit options, pedestrian-friendly sidewalks, bicycle lanes and appropriate bike and pedestrian accommodation, plus safe pedestrian and bicycle crossings, encourage the reduced use of vehicles for short and long trips, and increase multimodal traffic capacity. By reducing the number and length of automobile trips, greenhouse gas emissions can be reduced. Climate action concepts related to local street networks were the most identified throughout *Walk/Roll LV* and reinforced in forty-two of its Strategies or Recommendations. A specific Recommendation within Chapter 6 of *Walk/Roll LV* supports complete streets and context-sensitive bicycle and pedestrian supportive design. Within *FutureLV*, Policy 2.3 encourages enhanced transit connections to improve mobility, and its Actions aim to enhance public transit service and pedestrian and bicycle facilities along corridors.

Source: United States Environmental Protection Agency

Transportation emissions do not include emissions from non-transportation mobile sources such as agriculture and construction equipment. “Other” sources include buses, motorcycles, pipelines and lubricants.
Transportation Demand Management and Systems Strategies

*FutureLV, Walk/RollLV*

For more efficient use of transportation resources and the reduction in vehicle miles traveled, transportation demand management strategies can be implemented locally and regionally. Transportation demand management strategies focus on changing travel behavior, including trip length, travel mode, time of day, etc. to reduce the number of vehicle trips and increase mobility options. *Walk/RollLV* includes 13 Strategies or Recommendations that focus on transportation demand management. A specific Policy and Program Recommendation within *Walk/RollLV* establishes a regional transportation demand management (TDM) program aimed at reducing single-occupancy vehicle travel and encouraging sustainable modes. Within *FutureLV*, an Action with Policy 2.2 aims to enhance incident management strategies, along with an action within Policy 5.1 that supports the implementation of complete streets and traffic-calming measures.

**Daily Vehicle Miles Traveled in the Lehigh Valley**

- **9.3 MILLION** in 1990
- **14.8 MILLION** in 2019
- **59%** in less than 30 years
Transportation Facility Siting and Community Design

*FutureLV, Walk/RollLV*

For the region to benefit from complete and highly connected streets, it is essential for community design and development review processes to secure rights-of-way and require transportation facilities that support public transit, bicycle and pedestrian networks in neighborhoods, communities and regions. Without transit, bicycle and pedestrian routes from a resident’s neighborhood to a desired destination, travel will almost certainly involve a vehicle and therefore increase greenhouse gas emissions. *Walk/RollLV* includes 34 Strategies or Recommendations related to pedestrian facility design and transportation infrastructure siting that support highly connected streets. Specifically, Pedestrian Network Recommendations include design recommendations such as Connected, Accessible and Comfortable Sidewalks, Safe and Frequent Crossings and Pedestrian-Supportive Roadway Operations. In *FutureLV*, an Action under Policy 4.4 supports the connection of regional trails to Centers, Corridors and historic assets.

Image from *Walk/RollLV*. 
Creation of Multimodal Transportation Corridors

*FutureLV*

Centers and Corridors are great places for the region to grow because they can support a variety of land uses, housing types and transportation options in one space. Multimodal transportation Corridors connect residential neighborhoods to social, cultural, and economic opportunities. Mixed-transportation corridor concepts within *FutureLV* support vehicles, walkers, rollers, bicyclists and public transit in one safe, quality space. Establishing and strengthening these routes can reduce vehicle congestion and create alternatives for travelers that lower greenhouse gas emissions as residents are encouraged to use alternatives to personal vehicles. *FutureLV* includes 13 Policies, Actions or Special Sections that emphasize multimodal transportation corridor improvements. Specifically, Policy 2.1 encourages development of a mixed-transportation network to support a more compact development pattern, optimize roadway capacity and encourage alternative travel options.

*FutureLV: The Regional Plan* MacArthur Road Concept in Whitehall Township.
Infill Development and Redevelopment

*FutureLV*

A land use policy that promotes infill development and redevelopment of existing neighborhoods accommodates new residents and expanding businesses within current infrastructure. The preservation of historic structures and the adaptive reuse of buildings preserves open spaces and carbon sinks, while reducing sprawl. In total, ideas of infill and redevelopment were found in 16 *FutureLV* Policies, Actions, or Special Sections. Policy 5.4’s Actions emphasize these ideas and promote development that complements the unique history, environment, culture and needs of the Valley. When paired with good design, the creation of a compact development form, through the usage of infill development and redevelopment, can be a key tool that adds value to existing assets and protects the region’s quality of life, while alleviating development pressure on farmlands and natural resource areas.

*FutureLV: The Regional Plan* Shopping Mall Redevelopment Concept of Whitehall Mall at MacArthur Road and Grape Street in Whitehall Township.
Conclusion

While these main climate themes are at the forefront of *FutureLV*, Lehigh and Northampton counties’ *Livable Landscapes plans* and *Walk/RollLV* climate action, there are many facets in which the regional and county plans increase climate resiliency across the Lehigh Valley. The Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, along with Lehigh and Northampton counties, have recognized the increased threat climate change poses to the region. Through the regional and county open space plans for the Lehigh Valley, climate action that fosters new growth, the protection of natural resources and active transportation networks is strongly embedded throughout its Goals, Policies and Actions.

Climate change is having profound impacts on the Lehigh Valley as rising temperatures increase health concerns for sensitive populations, air quality is compromised, water resources and aquatic habitats are threatened, and enhanced natural hazards create risks to persons, property and infrastructure, among many impacts. Beyond the foundational goals, policies and actions established by the regional plans stated above, much more needs to be done. The next step in the process is working on behalf of both counties and the local municipalities to establish a greenhouse gas inventory for the region. Further steps are to create a process to engage Lehigh Valley businesses, residents, academic institutions, local governments, academic institutions, local governments,
county government and other interested persons in the discussion of the GHG inventory results, and the development of a work program for a regional climate action plan, culminating in the creation of ClimateLV: The Regional Climate Action Plan in coordination with our community engagement partners. The good news is the LVPC has already applied to participate with the PA Department of Environmental Protection Local Climate Action Program that starts later this summer and runs through Spring 2022. The program provides technical assistance to create the GHG inventory and subsequent climate action plan. The program works best with a hands-on approach by local partners, and we promise to accomplish that.

There are many other intended next steps as well. The Lehigh Valley Hazard Mitigation Plan was adopted in 2018 and is due to be updated by October 2023. The current plan addresses 25 natural and man-made hazards from flooding, droughts, extreme heat and winter storms to utility interruption and infectious diseases and pandemics. Although anticipated impacts of climate change are discussed in the plan, there is much more to do to fully prepare for the increased risks it brings for many hazards. COVID-19 issued a wake-up call, if needed, to be even more diligent in our risk assessments and mitigation actions.

Further, the greenhouse gas inventory has many implications for the Lehigh Valley transportation work program related to ensuring air quality is protected or enhanced with infrastructure improvements. Components of the greenhouse gas inventory can feed directly into the regional transportation air quality model and provide enhancements in our understanding of real impacts and direct policy moving forward.

**Tropical Storm Isaias vs Historical Highest Discharge at US Geological Survey Gauges**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Discharge (Cubic Feet per Second)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 4, 2020</td>
<td>Little Lehigh Creek at Allentown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 22, 1972</td>
<td>8,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 4, 2020</td>
<td>Jordan Creek near Schnecksville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 22, 1972</td>
<td>8,740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 4, 2020</td>
<td>Jordan Creek at Allentown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 23, 1972</td>
<td>16,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 4, 2020</td>
<td>Monocacy Creek at Bethlehem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 18, 2004</td>
<td>2,690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Historical Highest Discharge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 4, 2020</td>
<td>11,800</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 4, 2020</td>
<td>7,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 4, 2020</td>
<td>16,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 4, 2020</td>
<td>5,470</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Water management for the Lehigh Valley requires much greater attention as well. We need to remember no further back than August 2020 to Tropical Storm Isaias on how increased intensity of storm events can have great consequences. Peak storm runoff from Isaias in northwest Lehigh County was the highest ever recorded at local stream gages, leaving behind damage to transportation infrastructure (roads and bridges) in the millions of dollars. We now set aside specific funds in the LVTS Transportation Improvement Program for future storm damages, diverting the dollars away from many other critical transportation needs. We need to update our stormwater management planning to better account for climate change impacts, especially with requirements for green infrastructure components to project designs. We need to extend our stormwater management planning to assist local governments in meeting their ongoing and ever more restrictive obligations to improve stormwater discharge quality through the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) program. We also know we need to invest the same effort for when it doesn’t rain—when drought grips the region and impacts agricultural productivity and threatens water supplies for daily needs. As development progresses, it is imperative to focus more fully on the direct relationships between land use decisions and water management using an integrated water management approach. And lest we forget, FutureLV: The Regional Plan, which embodies the regional comprehensive plan and the LVTS Long-Range Transportation Plan, is on a 4-year update cycle, which begins in 2022. This represents an opportunity to reinforce all these climate efforts in the master plan for the region to help guide the counties and municipalities to mid-century and beyond.

So much to do and all essential to ensure the Lehigh Valley accepts the challenge to get to the forefront of climate action.
### Project Review Summary Sheet

**Environment Committee**

**Date:** June 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Brief Statement of Purpose</th>
<th>LVPC Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Municipal Waste Permit Renewal Application (Act 97 Review)</td>
<td>Forks Township</td>
<td>Application to PADEP to renew municipal waste permit by Daniels Sharpsmart, Inc. for their existing facility, which is used to process and treat medical and infectious waste. The facility is located at 925 Conroy Place near the Uhler and Kesslersville roads intersection. No modifications to the facility are proposed with this application. Provided notification of receipt to Forks Township.</td>
<td>Exhibits consistency with <em>FutureLV: The Regional Plan:</em> Provide environmentally responsible and economical solid, electronic and hazardous waste disposal and recycling (of Policy 3.2). PA Department of Environmental Protection performs technical review of application.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
June 16, 2021

Michael P. Hanlon
435 West Hamilton Street
Allentown PA 18101
Michael.Hanlon@AllentownPA.gov

RE: Street Vacation
West Sycamore Street from North Brick Street to West Allen Street
City of Allentown
Lehigh County

The Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC) will consider the subject amendment at its Transportation Planning Committee and Full Commission meetings, pursuant to the requirements of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC). Discussion on agenda items largely happens during the Committee meeting. Both meetings are virtual, please see the meeting details below to attend. The LVPC will issue a follow-up letter after the Commission meeting should the Commission have any additional comments.

- LVPC Transportation Planning Committee Meeting
  o June 24th, 2021 at 5:30 PM
  o [https://lvpc.org/meetings.html](https://lvpc.org/meetings.html)
- LVPC Full Commission Meeting
  o June 24th, 2021 at 7:00 PM
  o [https://lvpc.org/meetings.htm](https://lvpc.org/meetings.htm)

Mr. Hanlon,

The proposed street vacation was submitted by Justin D. Gross, Project Manager, on behalf of Lehigh Engineering Associates for a portion of West Sycamore Street east of North Brick Street to West Allen Street.

West Sycamore Street is essentially a spur east of North Brick Street. Per Mr. Gross’ application, the existing dwellings along the north side of West Sycamore Street are planned to be razed, therefore road-frontage access is no longer required for these parcels.

The proposed street vacation, submitted for recommendations under Section 304 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, was reviewed for general consistency with the intent of FutureLV: The Regional Plan.

Street vacation requests require all property owners to agree to the vacation, along with the City. Mr. Gross noted that all properties along this portion of West Sycamore Street are owned by the Waterfront Development Company and therefore consent to the vacation request.
For context, West Sycamore Street is a local road, owned by the City of Allentown. The area where West Sycamore Street ends is in the Riverfront Redevelopment Overlay district, where a portion of the redevelopment of Riverside Drive project is planned.

The request does call for the vacation of the street with utilities. The City should consider the impact of the removal of the fire hydrant on West Sycamore Street (as seen on the picture on the left) that sits in front of 19 West Sycamore Street. This is the only hydrant that serves this block and the adjacent residences on the west side of North Brick Street. In addition, the utility pole on the northeast corner of North Brick Street and West Sycamore also provides service to the residences a block north of this location along the east side of North Brick Street.

By way of reference, Policy 2.2 of *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*, encourages the enhancement of incident management strategies to promote a safe, well-maintained transportation network while capitalizing on existing infrastructure. Policy 5.1 promotes safe and secure community design and emergency management by enhancing planning and emergency response efforts.

The City should work with the developer, if this has not already occurred to coordinate utility easements and fire service.

In closing, it has been confirmed with Mark Jaindl of the Waterfront Development Company, that the street, once vacated, will be incorporated into the Waterfront Development site. It is of note the Waterfront Development was reviewed by the Commission and found consistent with the *Regional Plan*. Because this vacation request is in conjunction with the larger Waterfront Development project, it is also consistent with *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*. Specifically, the construction of Riverside Drive and the Waterfront Development project’s internal street system connecting to the City’s grid. This objective is consistent with *FutureLV*: Policy 2.1 which calls for the development of mixed-transportation network by establishing mixed-transportation corridors; Policy 2.2 by encouraging an interconnected street network; and Policy 2.3 by enhancing transit connections to improve mobility by linking job and population centers, enhancing pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and strengthening mixed transportation access. The larger project and it’s associated trail, road and transit connections accomplish this.

We appreciate the City’s consideration of these goals in as much as it relates to the vacation request of West Sycamore Street.
Sincerely,

Becky A. Bradley, AICP
Executive Director

Brian Hite
Senior Traffic Technician
Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Projects

South Bethlehem Corridor Connections, City of Bethlehem (C-C. Barry)
MPMS 110647 – let January 14, 2021
• NTP issued on March 22, 2021

Geiger’s Covered Bridge Rehab, Lehigh County (C-C. Barry)
MPMS 110967 – est. let September 16, 2021
• Environmental clearance received March 12, 2021
• Utility clearance received March 25, 2021
• ROW clearance received April 26, 2021
• Structure plans comments received from Bridge Unit March 15, 2021, revised structure plans resubmitted to Bridge Unit April 26, 2021
• Construction inspection agreement executed May 11, 2021

Allentown Jordan Creek Greenway Trail, City of Allentown (C-C. Barry)
MPMS 111442 – est. let August 26, 2021
• ROW clearance received May 27, 2021
• Plans submitted to Contract Management for review May 27, 2021

D&L Trail Catasauqua to Canal Park, Lehigh County (C-C. Barry)
MPMS 111443 – est. let August 12, 2021
• Designer continues working on final plans
• County continues working on ROW acquisitions

Coopersburg Streetscape Ph 4, Coopersburg Borough (C-C. Barry)
MPMS 111444 – let January 14, 2021
• NTP issued on March 23, 2021
Multimodal Transportation Fund Projects

Hamilton Boulevard, Lower Macungie Township (C-C. Barry)
MPMS 112631 – est. let TBD (paper let)
- Township to begin preliminary plans pending potential development impacts

Traffic Signal and Intersection Improvements, City of Allentown (C-C. Barry)
MPMS 106849 & 115989 – est. let TBD (paper let)
- Environmental documents under District review
- HOP remains in progress for intersection portion of project

Coopersburg Streetscape Phase 3, 5, & 7, Coopersburg Borough (C-C. Barry)
MPMS 110988, 112628, 113303 – let January 14, 2021
- NTP issued on March 23, 2021

Allentown Waterfront Riverside Dr., The Waterfront Development (C-C. Barry)
MPMS 87144 – let February 8, 2021 (paper let)
- Reimbursement agreement time extension request approved, new expiration June 8, 2022
- Under construction

Main St./SR 873 & Walnut Street Improvements, Slatington Borough (C-L. Montgomery)
MPMS 113099 – est. let May 25, 2023
- Project to be combined with the District’s Walnut Street Bridge project
- Contribution agreement between Borough and District executed April 28, 2021
- Design progresses on Walnut Street Bridge project

Chrin Commerce Centre, The Charles Chrin Real Estate Trust (C-L. Montgomery)
MPMS 106747 – est. let March 1, 2021 (paper let)
- NTP issues on March 23, 2021

Easton Wood Ave., City of Easton (C-C. Barry)
MPMS 110989 – est. let fall 2021 (paper let)
- City continues working on design

Lower Saucon Road Bridge, Lower Saucon Township (C-C. Barry)
MPMS 113298 – est. let fall 2021 (paper let)
- Structural Adequacy approval received April 19, 2021
- Utility documents submitted to Utility Unit November 30, 2020, designer to coordinate aerial utilities, ongoing

Iron Works Catasauqua Streetscape, Catasauqua Borough (C-C. Barry)
MPMS 115798 – est. let TBD (paper let)
- Working with sponsor on information needed for reimbursement agreement

Wilson Borough Improvements, Wilson Borough (C-C. Barry)
MPMS 115769 – est. let TBD (paper let)
- Reimbursement agreement sent to sponsor for review and signature May 14, 2021
Air Products Global Headquarters, Upper Macungie Township (C-L. Montgomery)
MPMS 115949 – let July 2020 (paper let)
  • Project was let in July 2020
  • Modified grant agreement signed by sponsor and District, submitted to Central Office for processing May 24, 2021

Allentown 15th St. Traffic Signal Improvements, City of Allentown
MPMS TBC – let TBD
  • Newly awarded, kick off meeting to be scheduled

SR 222 and Grange Rd., Upper Macungie Township
MPMS TBC – let TBD
  • Newly awarded, kick off meeting to be scheduled
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<td>UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE</td>
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May 2021

Plan Activity

Lehigh County
- Reviews: 28
- Acres: 90.4

Northampton County
- Reviews: 20
- Acres: 430.7

Regional Totals*
- 5 Subdivision/Lot Line Adjustments
- 26 Development
- 17 Stormwater Management
- 5 Municipal Ordinances and Maps
- 521.1 Acres

* Includes preliminary and final plans

Types of New Development

Housing: 200 Total Units
- Single-Family Detached: 71
- Townhouses: 36
- Apartments: 77
- Planned Residential: 0
- Twins: 16
- Assisted-Living: 0
- Mobile Home Park: 0
- Condos: 0

Non-Residential: 1,019,226 Total Square Feet
- Commercial: 151,947
- Retail: 0
- Public/Quasi-Public: 4,611
- Industrial (Warehouse)*: 802,792 (W: 770,107)
- Office: 59,876
- Transportation: 0
- Agriculture: 0
- Recreational: 0

* Warehouse number is a subset of industrial total square footage

Location of Development

- Plan Activity

Plan Details and Previous Reports at lvpc.org/subdivisionreport.html
* August 4 was impacted by Hurricane Isaias
** February 2 was impacted by Winter Storm Orlena
Let me start by laying a couple of giant numbers on you: $8.1 billion and $4 billion.

The first, $8.1 billion, is the shortfall Pennsylvania has annually in addressing its transportation needs. As a result, the network maintenance and improvements are falling behind. For example, as of 2019, 2,500 bridges statewide were rated in poor condition.

The second, $4 billion, is the shortfall the Lehigh Valley has over the next 25 years, according to the analysis in “FutureLV: The Regional Plan,” in funding its transportation needs. That’s just to maintain what we have in good condition, not to make major changes. And that number will continue to grow as more people and businesses move here.

It’s not like I’m sounding some previously secret siren here. This alarm has been blaring for more than two decades. But I am saying that we’ve reached a tipping point and we, as taxpayers, commuters, businesses, residents, governments and consumers, need to start listening to it. Now. Yes, right now!

There’s no quick fix and no magic bullet because this is a very complex problem. Under our current four-year Transportation Improvement Program, the Lehigh Valley expects to spend $452 million on road, bridge and transit projects.

We get most of our money through state and federal channels. It is all based on complex — and in many aspects, outdated — formulas that are weighted heavily on the population, vehicle miles traveled and interstate highway miles, among other things.

Overall, roughly 80% of our money is federal, with most of the remaining 20% coming from state and local sources. With no local dedicated source, it gives us very little control over the amount of our funding. And the federal portion of the money is often unpredictable. It’s difficult to know what priorities a particular administration or Congress will have, and the biggest funding pot — the federal gas tax — has not increased since 1993. Meanwhile, over that same period, the cost of construction has gone up 140%, and nearly everyone is driving more fuel-efficient vehicles. Less money is coming in and costs have gone up. Translation: not sustainable.
Pennsylvania legislators in 2013 agreed to increase the state gas tax by about 28.5 cents over five years, raising an estimated $2.4 billion a year for transportation, but it was never expected to be enough to close the state’s funding gap. More relevant is that with more people working remotely, more efficient cars and ultimately an expected rapid increase in the number of electric cars on the road, the gas tax is no longer reliable on the state or federal level. Pennsylvania’s gas tax revenues were down $500 million in 2020. It’s become such an issue that the state in recent years has had to reduce funding to regions like the Lehigh Valley, reduce the scope and scale of state investments and even delay or cancel projects. Yet, over the past five years, local governments in the Lehigh Valley have approved over 30 million square feet of new industrial development and our population grew by more than 13,000.

On its surface, we’re talking about roads, bridges, pedestrian and cyclist safety projects and transit, but in reality this is about our economy and everyday quality of life. It’s about getting kids to school, people to work and goods from one place to the next. Few things are more important. When we were storming the grocery store, masks secured and elbows out, in pursuit of toilet paper this time last year, we all understood the value of getting supplies to people and the power of a reliable, safe and secure transportation system.

The good news is that it appears that the deafening alarms are being heard and a lot of really qualified, experienced and intelligent people are studying this and considering big changes. The current federal funding legislation, the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, expires Sept. 30 and federal leaders are negotiating what will take its place.

Federal officials are proposing a major funding infusion — in the trillions of dollars — that would not only pump more money into roads, bridges and transit, but expand the very definition of infrastructure to include upgrades to water and sewer and digital connectivity. Even the scaled-back versions rolling around in Congress would add much-needed funding into the system. At the state level, the new options Pennsylvania is considering would bring a sea change that could eventually phase out the gas tax. Almost everything is on the table.

The Pennsylvania Transportation Revenue Options Commission, of which I am a member, is viewing a sprawling menu of options. It includes tolling bridges and roads, raising a variety of sales, income or corporate taxes and a long list of drivers fees that range from new electric car fees to registration fee increases to charging all drivers a mileage-based user fee. I’m not here to advocate for any particular options, but I will say the list is long because the need is great, the problem is compound-complex, and if it were easy to solve, it would be done by now. We’re tasked with making recommendations by Aug. 1.

Approval of any or all of it will not be easy for anyone. It’s going to take courage by our legislators at all levels of government. It will even take your courage. Yep, that’s right, you!

Mobility, the foundation of our economy and day-to-day existence, has a cost. Nothing is free, and if we as community members believe in jobs, schools, medical care and any of those places that we need to get to, we have to make sure that we have the infrastructure to get there.
You’ve seen the “No Farms, No Food” bumper sticker, right? Well, I’m making a “No Infrastructure, No Economy” one. Honk if you see me.

If we want to do this right, we need more local funding that leads to more local and regional control, and we need built-in recurring increases that keep us from repeatedly crossing this road every time one administration — or several in a row — veer their focus away from our transportation infrastructure.

Yes, we’re going to need to collect and spend this money more efficiently, but we have to understand that it’s going to take more — a lot more — money than we’ve been spending the past 30 years.

And we all have a role in this, too. As taxpayers, commuters, residents, businesses and consumers, we need to understand what’s at stake — that this is central to our economy and daily lives.

Most importantly, we need to be OK with paying to rehabilitate a transportation network that’s been left largely patched, when it needs to be rebuilt, and in some cases expanded.

Finally, we need to tell our legislators that we’re OK with paying. That we want to support our economy, community and future, and we will support them when they make tough decisions to invest in our transportation system. Call yours today.

*Becky Bradley is Executive Director of the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission*
The Lehigh Valley made the New York Times again last week, and why shouldn’t we be part of “All the News That’s Fit to Print” in one of the world’s most trusted daily publications? Thousands of people who work in New York and New Jersey choose to live here in the Lehigh Valley — in some cases enduring a daily 90-minute, mind-numbing commute along Interstate 78 — just to take advantage of this region’s unique character and high quality of life. It should surprise no one that our successful and growing region seems to be getting publicity with greater frequency in recent years. But the story I’m referring to is “A New Crop in Pennsylvania: Warehouses.” It detailed the proliferation of large warehouses sprouting up in the Lehigh Valley and put a specific focus on laying out the pros and cons of the more than 30,000 warehouse-related jobs that can start at $16 an hour for workers with no more than a high school diploma. These warehouses and these jobs have a place in our economy.

I don’t so much take issue with what the article said, but more so with what it didn’t say. While it was noting how warehouses have made the Lehigh Valley a depot on the global supply chain — true — it didn’t say that our future is not even remotely dependent on these buildings or these jobs. It didn’t say that we have some of the world’s largest and most dynamic companies innovating and creating the jobs of the future. While natural pet food pioneer Freshpet spends $100 million to grow in the Hanover Township, Northampton County, Orasure Technologies is at the cutting edge of COVID-19 rapid testing innovation in Bethlehem, even as Mack Truck produces the kind of zero emission electric trucks that will be picking up trash from New York City streets as part of the city’s ambitious goal to cut greenhouse gas emissions 80% by 2035.
We need a diverse economy with family-supporting jobs and the kind of sustainable development that is detailed in the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission’s “FutureLV: The Regional Plan,” which in April won the Governor’s Award for Local Government Excellence. Goal Four of the plan calls for a competitive, creative and sustainable region, in part by linking innovative companies to educations, and our community leaders are delivering.

There are many working on this issue, including our partners at the Workforce Board, Northampton County Community College, Lehigh-Carbon Community College and other higher education institutions and technical schools in the area. Many of the region’s employers are preparing their workforce to transition, by offering tuition, training and mentorship programs that support our next-generation economy. We must not aim for the lowest common denominator as we prepare for our long-term future and we must prepare in the short run in order for the Lehigh Valley to remain successful.

Our future is tied to education, job training and innovative public and private initiatives that create jobs and help protect our environment. We need more efforts like the MCS Industries solar project in Palmer Township, PPL’s five-year commitment to reduce greenhouse gases and Air Products’ hydrogen fuel cell innovation. These are examples in keeping with the LVPC’s 60-year mission to promote clean air, water and a sustainable future for our children and grandchildren.

Much the way those New York officials hope to use electric trucks for climate resiliency, these companies and educators here in the Lehigh Valley are also building workforce resiliency.

That doesn’t mean these multiplying warehouses — municipalities have approved nearly 30 million square feet since 2015 — can’t be part of that future. We’re very much thinking of the future each time one of these massive structures comes before our board. It’s why FutureLV is very clear about where these warehouses should not be built and why our planners often suggest developers go back to the drawing board to add green infrastructure, pedestrian accessibility, traffic-reducing road work and additional study to determine the impact of trucks on the surrounding community.

The point of those recommendations is to get our municipal partners to value the land these warehouse builders are developing. If they’re going to locate here, then let’s make
sure they’re building in the right places, and don’t ruin the character all those New York workers come here to experience. Let’s make sure they respect our community and future. It’s quality, not quantity, that brings and keeps people and businesses here. Let’s continue to value what makes this region great and not trade it away in a race to the bottom.

*Greg Zebrowski is chairman of the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission*