



2 | Key Issues

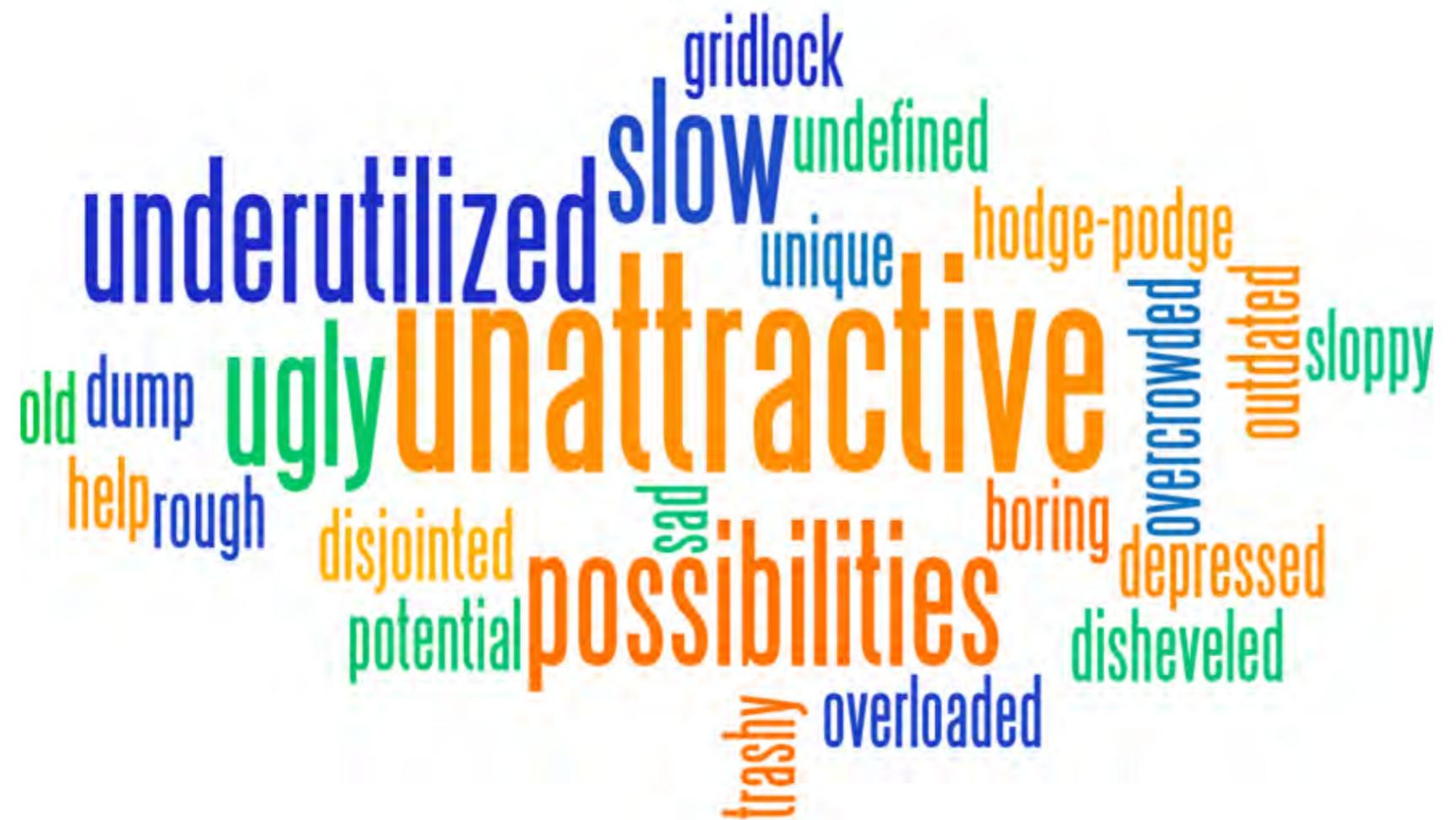
Introduction

Route 30 is the main commercial corridor in East Whiteland Township. However, many residents, business owners, and passers-by do not have a favorable view of the corridor. As shown in Figure 2.1, people often describe the corridor as “unattractive” and “disjointed.” An extension of the historic Main Line of Philadelphia, this corridor lacks a cohesive character and identity and could be mistaken for any older suburban arterial in any major metropolitan area.

When surveyed during the development of the East Whiteland Township’s Comprehensive Plan Update in 2016, issues along Route 30 related to traffic congestion, connectivity, and overall appearance rated among the top pressing concerns in the community. The Comprehensive Plan says, “This busy and important roadway struggles to present an attractive and positive image of the township and its residents.”

However, members of the Route 30 Committee and the community also noted that the corridor has possibilities and potential. This chapter describes some of the key issues that must be addressed in order to revitalize and realize the true potential of a lively, mixed use and pedestrian friendly corridor.

Figure 2.1 – Community input on one word to describe Route 30

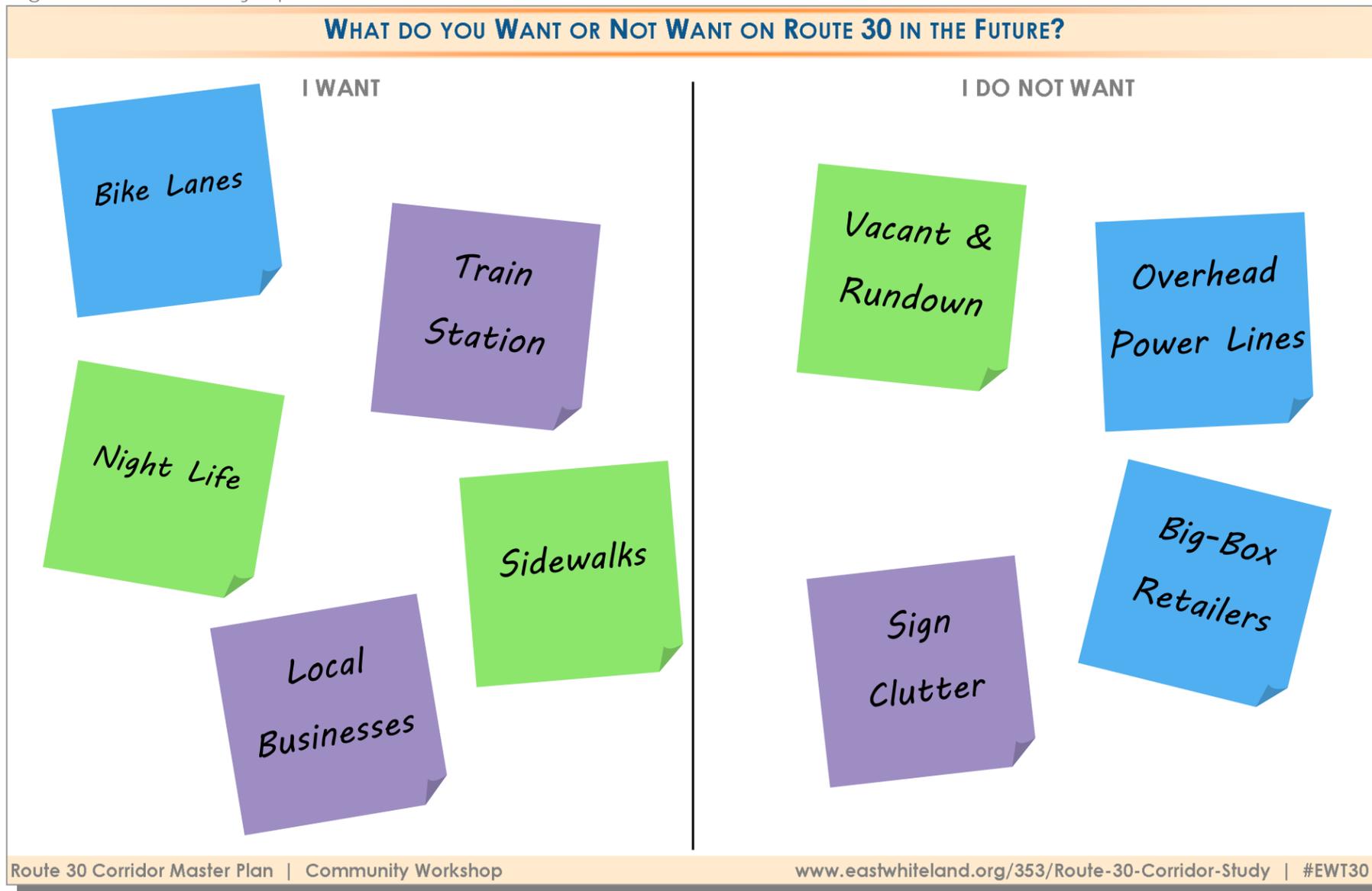


What do the people want?

At the first community workshop for the Route 30 Corridor Master Plan, attendees were asked to identify key features that they would or would not like to see on Route 30 in the future. This exercise helped to establish community wants and needs for the corridor. Some common themes from this exercise are identified on Figure 2.2.



Figure 2.2 – Community input on desired features for Route 30



Stakeholder Interviews

At the onset of this project, key stakeholders were identified who hold a particular interest in the Route 30 corridor. The stakeholders represented local institutions, businesses along the corridor, residents, and regional partners. Each stakeholder was interviewed to provide their input on the potential opportunities and future vision of the corridor. A summary of their input on top assets, challenges, and their vision for the corridor is provided below. This provides a snapshot of some of the key issues and opportunities for Route 30

Top asset: Location, Location, Location

- Access to major highways, including US 30 Bypass, US 202, PA 29, and PA Turnpike
- Close proximity to the Great Valley Corporate Park, which is one of the largest corporate parks in the Delaware Valley.
- Close proximity to the SEPTA/ Amtrak Keystone Corridor and stations in Exton, Malvern, and Paoli
- Regionally accessible to other population and employment centers, including Exton, King of Prussia, and Philadelphia
- Within the Great Valley School District

Biggest impediments to attracting growth

- Traffic congestion
- Unattractive streetscape and building facades
- Zoning in East Whiteland Township is not flexible enough to encourage the type of development that is desired
- Constrained properties due to the railroad tracks on the south side
- Significant property owners with no interest or plans for redevelopment

Vision for future of Route 30 corridor:

- This corridor is in need of a facelift – including the look of the buildings, the way the road operates, and landscaping.
- Traffic flow must be improved. Either by adding capacity, or by improving operations.
- Frazer needs to have a consistent “theme,” from the type of businesses to the landscaping.
- Embrace small scale commercial. Frazer should be full of upscale retailers and restaurants, not big box stores.

Land Use—Key Issues

In terms of land use, the properties along the Route 30 corridor are a peculiar mix of old and new, pristine and unkempt, planned and improvised. The overall effect is often described as a “hodge-podge” by community members and is in direct contrast to the manicured and planned corporate campuses found along PA 29, just minutes away. Disparate uses, an auto-oriented environment, lack of street trees and landscaping, parking lots that seemingly spill into the roadway, and an abundance of signage all contribute to a lackluster appearance that is of great concern to residents and business owners. From a land use perspective, key issues fall into three broad categories: **vitality and viability, lack of community identity, and overall appearance.**

Vitality and Viability

Historically, Route 30 has been designated as the commercial retail center of East Whiteland Township, populated by auto-oriented businesses, shopping centers, and stand-alone retail uses, while other types of uses (institutional, office, residential or manufacturing) are clearly directed to other areas of East Whiteland Township through zoning.

The sole reliance on retail for this corridor contributes to the issues now seen. The retail market faces tremendous uncertainty, as brick and mortar stores struggle in the face of increased internet sales. In addition, changing demographic trends indicate that people are marrying later, having fewer kids, and living longer than ever before. These trends translate into a demand for different kinds of environments and spaces that are more mixed use in nature, provide different experiences, as well as the option to walk, bike or use public transportation.

The ability of East Whiteland Township to adapt to these changing conditions will greatly impact the viability of the Route 30 corridor in the future.

Lack of Community Identity

Having a strong community identity can be a source of pride for residents and attractive to new businesses. In East Whiteland Township, there are few, if any, features along Route 30 that directly link it to the Township, its history, or other positive associations. When asked what is missing from Route 30 that could better connect it to East Whiteland, residents gave several different answers:

- Route 30 needs green spaces and other public/quasi-public

community spaces for informal gathering;

- Route 30 needs entertainment venues and community activities for meeting up with neighbors;
- Route 30 needs improved preservation of historic buildings, and other features, that link it to the past;
- Route 30 needs coordinated signage that identifies the corridor and lets a visitor know when they have entered or exited a community that takes pride in itself.

On the positive side, a key strength of the Route 30 corridor in the eyes of the residents is the number and variety of local businesses. From the Frazer Diner, to People’s Light Theater, and the Pinball Gallery, the Route 30 corridor is home to an array of unique destinations. Despite the challenges of the corridor, businesses there do have many advantages as were highlighted during the Comprehensive Plan process. The high volume of vehicles, close proximity to neighborhoods, multiple crossroads (on the northern side), connectivity on the regional scale, relatively low rents, and the presence of significant institutions such as Immaculata University, are all viewed as competitive advantages. Promoting new development and redevelopment, while retaining the local businesses and flare is a key challenge of these efforts.

Overall Appearance

Aside from vacancies and neglected sites, Route 30’s disheveled appearance also derives from its auto-oriented nature and development over time. Due to the suburban nature of the community and the function of the roadway, most sites along Route 30 cater almost exclusively to automobiles. Cars are the assumed mode of transportation along the corridor, so most buildings are set back from the roadway and thus the roadway is fronted by either large areas of surface parking or parking with no curb cuts.

Due to the incremental development of Route 30, there has been no unified vision for its appearance, particularly the streetscape. Communities on either side of East Whiteland have a designated program of street trees, street lights and sidewalks that line the roadway and provide a planned and attractive, visually cohesive border to the street’s edge. East Whiteland can incorporate similar tactics to create a more positive and welcoming appearance to its main street.

Figure 2.3 – Images of Existing Land Uses along Route 30



Transportation—Key Issues

Frazer is situated in close proximity to multiple primary transportation corridors and regional destinations. Route 30 in East Whiteland Township serves as a major arterial connecting US 202 and US 30 Exton Bypass to PA 29 (from which the PA Turnpike can be accessed). Additionally, the roadway is fed by PA 352 and PA 401, both minor arterials. In addition to the land uses directly along Route 30, the corridor is in close proximity to major employment concentrations along PA 29 and further to the east. Also, Route 30 is used to access regional rail stations in Malvern and Paoli. All of these factors contribute to congestion and poor connectivity on the corridor. The key transportation related issues for the Route 30 corridor can be grouped into three main categories: **Traffic Congestion, Safety, and Multimodal Connectivity.**

Traffic Congestion

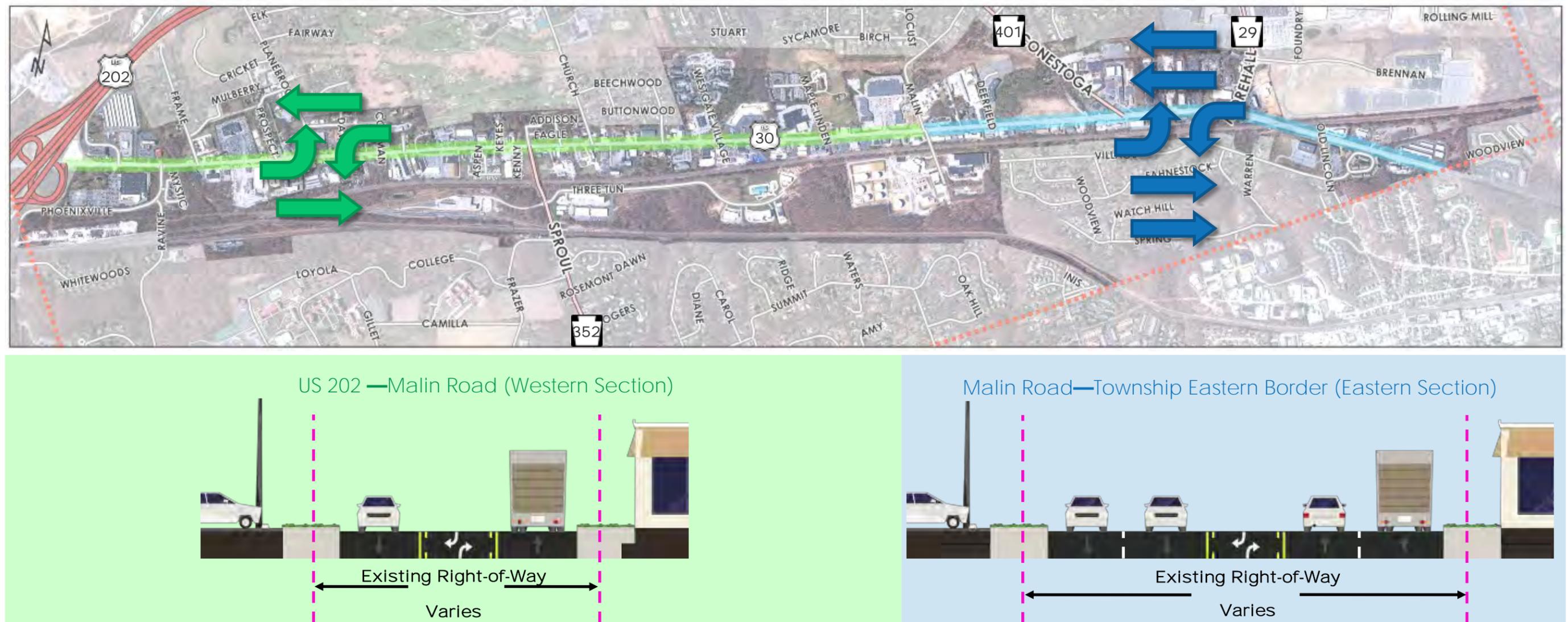
Route 30 benefits from having two travel lanes in each direction from U.S. 1 (City Avenue) at the border of Philadelphia and Lower Merion Township in Montgomery County to the intersection of Malin Road in East Whiteland Township. This transition is depicted in Figure 2.4 below. This narrowing to one travel lane in each direction west of Malin Road reduces the capacity of the roadway significantly, resulting in delays and long queues at key intersections during the morning and afternoon peak periods.

Another reason for the congestion is the limited roadway connectivity in the area. Active rail lines to the south and utility lines to the north have severely limited the north-south roadway connections. For example, PA 352 is one of the few north-south oriented roadways that cross the Norfolk Southern and Amtrak/SEPTA rail lines. As a result,

the Route 30 and PA 352 intersection operates over capacity with high levels of delay during both peak periods in existing conditions. The lack of roadway connections forces drivers to use the main arterials, which were not necessarily designed or built to handle current traffic volumes. Additionally, the congestion is exacerbated when there is an incident or issue on U.S. 202, which is parallel to the Route 30 corridor. Drivers divert from U.S. 202 and use Route 30 and other local roadways when there are lane closures due to a crash or construction.

The number of closely spaced driveways also contributes to congestion and safety issues along the corridor. There are approximately 130 unsignalized driveways, just in the 2.4 mile stretch between US 202 and Malin Road. Vehicles accelerating or decelerating into and out of driveways negatively impacts the flow of traffic along the corridor.

Figure 2.4 – Route 30 narrows to one lane in each direction west of Malin Road



Finally, based on anticipated growth and development along the corridor, traffic volumes are projected to increase by 80% over the next ten years. Figure 2.5 on the previous page shows existing and future (2027) intersection operations along the corridor during the afternoon peak period. In the future, almost every intersection is projected to operate over capacity with significant levels of delay.

In order to address existing congestion and improve traffic flow along the corridor in the near term, East Whiteland Township is implementing an adaptive signal control system for Route 30. This system will adjust the timing of signals based on traffic volumes to reduce unnecessary delays. The first phase of the system will be implemented in 2018 at signalized intersections between the US 202 ramps and Planebrook Road. The Township plans to pursue additional grant funding to complete upgrades at the eight remaining signalized intersections between PA 352 and Old Lincoln Highway.

Safety

When considering safety issues along Route 30 in East Whiteland Township, two distinct user groups should be identified: vehicular users and vulnerable users. Motor vehicles carry the majority of trips on Route 30 and drivers face distinct safety challenges due to traffic congestion and numerous conflict points. Vulnerable users would include people walking, bicycling, or using public transportation on the corridor. They face challenges that result from high vehicular traffic volumes and lack of adequate facilities.

According to crash data available from PennDOT, there were 284 reportable crashes along Route 30 in East Whiteland Township between 2010 and 2015. Crashes are considered “reportable” if there

are personal injuries or a vehicle must be towed from the scene. Over three quarters of these crashes were rear end and angle crash types. The most common crash type on the corridor, rear end crashes, are commonly associated with traffic congestion. Angle crashes occur at locations where two vehicles are making conflicting movements, often at driveways and intersections. Figure 2.6 illustrates the locations where mid-block crashes occur in the study area. Note, the large increase in mid-block crashes, particularly west of Malin Road. This is the point where the cross section transitions from two travel lanes in each direction to one. In this area, the crash rate is generally above the statewide average for this type of roadway

As noted before, the safety of vulnerable users in the study area is compromised because of the lack of adequate facilities, high traffic, volumes, traffic speeds, and numerous driveways along the Route 30

Figure 2.7—Image of a pedestrian walking along Route 30



corridor. Sidewalk connectivity in the corridor is limited. There are a few more recent developments where sidewalks were required to be installed, but there is not a consistent network for people to walk along or safely cross Route 30. As a result, many people choose to walk or bike on the roadway shoulder, even in areas where a sidewalk is provided. Based on PennDOT crash data, there were ten reportable crashes involving people walking or riding a bicycle on Route 30 between 2010 and 2015.

Multimodal Connectivity:

The Route 30 corridor through Frazer could be a desirable location to walk or bike because of the mix of commercial establishments, residential developments, and nearby institutions. Additionally, the corridor is close to several regional multimodal transportation assets, including the Chester Valley Trail to the north and the SEPTA/Amtrak

Figure 2.9—Existing bus stop on Route 30



Figure 2.6 – Mid-Block Crash locations (reportable) along Route 30 in East Whiteland Township



Keystone Corridor to the south. However, bicycle and pedestrian facilities along and connecting to Route 30 are extremely limited. There are almost no sidewalks along Route 30, and there are even fewer pedestrian facilities branching into the surrounding area. Additionally, most roads are only be suitable for the most skilled and experienced bicycle riders. This has been documented in DVRPC’s Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress (LTS, see Figure 2.8). The Bicycle LTS for each road was assigned based on the number of lanes, effective vehicle speed, and presence/type of bicycle facility. On the map, roads depicted in green are more suitable for less experienced riders and red are more suitable for strong and fearless riders. Route 30, PA 29, and PA 352 are colored red and today do not support on-road cycling for most people.

SEPTA’s Bus Route 204 provides bus service to this section of Route 30. The SEPTA Bus Route 204 connects people to Paoli Train Station to the east and Exton/Eagleview Corporate Park to the west with 30 minute headways during peak operation. The bus service is provided seven days a week. However, due to the lack of safe and connected pedestrian facilities, the transit user experience along Route 30 is poor. As depicted in Figure 2.9, many bus stops lack basic amenities, including safe and comfortable places to wait for the bus.

Future Considerations

At this time, the transportation industry is experiencing and preparing for significant changes to how we travel due to technological advances. The *2017 State of Telecommuting in the U.S. Employee Workforce Report* cites that the number of employees that work from home at least half of the time has increased 115% since 2005. Also during that time, ridesharing services captured through smart phone apps have become more prevalent and provide an alternative to driving, using public transit, or taxi services. Additionally, technologies for connected and autonomous or driverless vehicles are being developed and are currently being tested in Pennsylvania and across the country. These and other technological advances create uncertainty about the future demands and needs for transportation in our communities. East Whiteland Township has an opportunity to proactively plan and prepare for new mobility options that are currently emerging and the uncertain future of transportation. Flexibility and the ability to adapt to new transportation options in the future is an important consideration for the Route 30 corridor.

Figure 2.8 – DVRPC Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress

