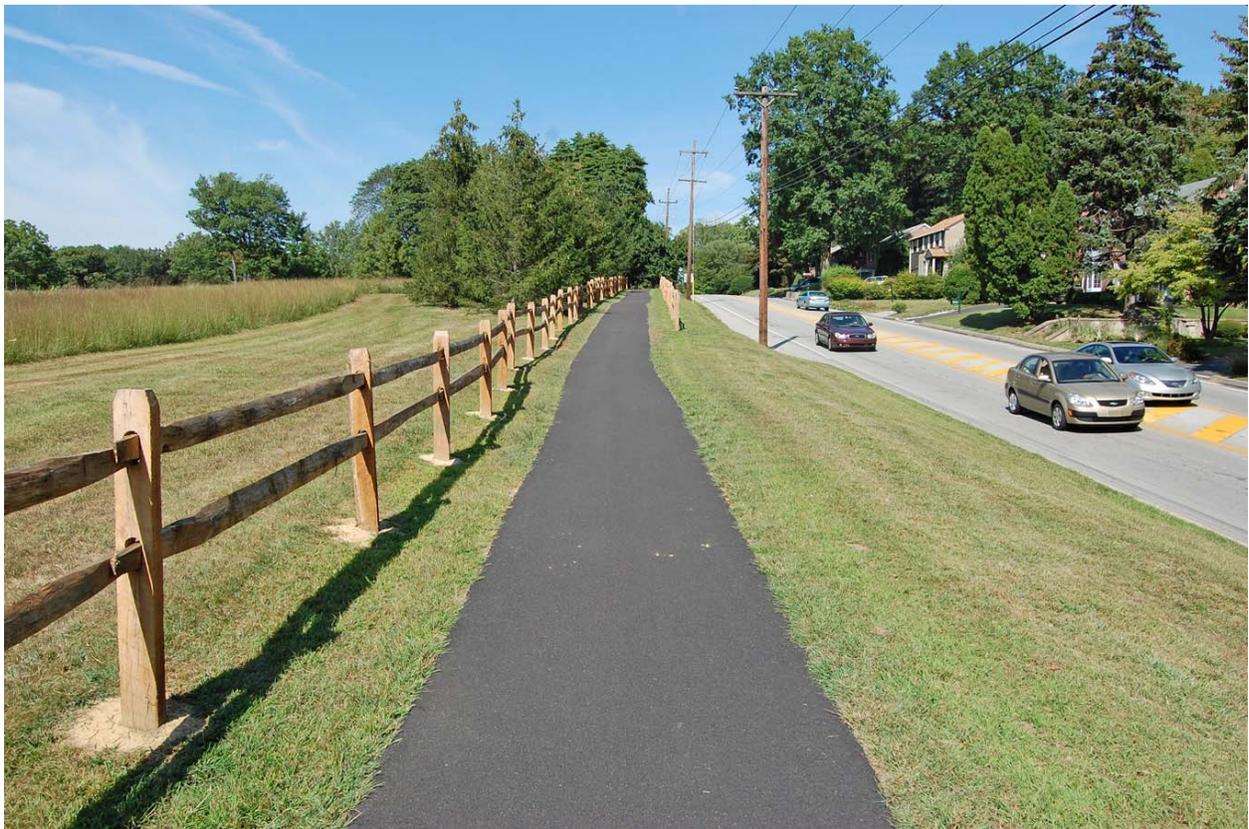


A FEASIBILITY STUDY for the
Whitemarsh Township
Pedestrian and Bicycle Network Plan

Montgomery County, Pennsylvania



Prepared for:

Whitemarsh Township
616 Germantown Pike
Lafayette Hill, PA 19444
www.whitemarshntp.org

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Prepared by:

Campbell Thomas & Co. Architects
1504 South Street
Philadelphia, PA 19146-1636
215-545-1076 / 215-545-8397 Fax
www.campbellthomas.com

with:

Arora and Associates, PC
Consulting Engineers
www.arorapc.com

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On the cover: Joshua Road Side Path between Ridge Pike and Germantown Pike

I. Executive Summary

A. Background

In the not too distant past, walking and bicycling were normal parts of everyday life in Whitemarsh Township. Children walked and rode bicycles to school, parks, and nearby shops. Adults walked and rode bicycles along relatively quiet roads. Trips to the store or to visit friends and neighbors were easily accomplished on foot or bicycle. But as development has intensified in recent decades and our society has grown ever more dependent on the automobile, this way of getting around – this way of life – has largely been lost. Children often cannot walk to the school bus stop, let alone to school or to parks. Adults cannot safely walk or bicycle along many of the key roads in the Township. In short, it is next to impossible to get around Whitemarsh Township today without an automobile. We cannot turn back the clock on the development that has occurred in the township and we cannot eliminate the traffic that has followed that development. But we can regain the quality of life that comes with bringing back long lost options for mobility and recreation in the township. The pedestrian and bicycle network recommended in this plan, once implemented, will allow our township to largely regain the quality of life we once enjoyed and allow walkers, runners, and bicyclists to get around our township along with the automobiles that currently dominate our streets.



Ridge Pike between Crescent Avenue and Chestnut Street

B. General Objectives of this Study

The overall objective of this study is to serve as a guide for Whitemarsh Township in the creation a network of sidepaths, sidewalks, trails, bike lanes, and other appropriate facilities to restore the ease and safety of walking and bicycling in the Township. This plan is intended to promote safe and convenient walking and bicycling within local neighborhoods and to regional attractions such as the Lafayette Hill business district, Montgomery County's trail network, Fort Washington State Park, the Schuylkill riverfront, and others. While residents will still take the majority of trips in automobiles, walking and bicycling should be restored to equal status as options for any trip one would wish to take within Whitemarsh Township.

C. Study Recommendations

This plan recommends a network of sidewalks, sidepaths, trails, bike lanes, and existing neighborhood streets already safe for walking and cycling that will provide walking or bicycling access between all locations in the Township. The entire network is depicted in the first map in Appendix A. While providing access to every part of the Township, the plan pays special attention to linking neighborhoods with the extensive network of trails that Montgomery County has built, and is planning to build. In add ition to assuring access throughout the Township, the plan also recommends larger, multi-use trails, for example alongside the roads that traverse the Dixon Estate. These trails will in turn provide access to Montgomery County's Green Ribbon Trail along the Wissahickon Creek. When complete, this network of trails will create significant recreational and transportation opportunities for walkers, runner, and bicyclists.

The completed network will consist of a variety of facility types, which are discussed in detail starting on page 17. In many cases, existing neighborhood streets allow for safe walking and bike riding in their current conditions, given wide cartways and very low traffic volumes. In other cases, there are existing sidewalks in places, but with gaps in coverage that need to be filled in. In still other areas, the narrower and more heavily traveled roads will need sidewalks or sidepaths to create walking opportunities that currently do not exist at all. Most of the sidewalks and sidepaths will be approximately 4-10 feet wide and will consist of a mix of paved and unpaved facilities. The multi-use paths should be about 12 feet wide (see photo) and may also consist of both paved and unpaved portions. Finally, bicycle routes are recommended for wider thoroughfares such as Germantown Pike. In some locations, formal bike lanes may be possible. In other areas, the bicycle route may consist of wide shared lanes and signs indicating the presence of bicyclists.



Valley Green Road with adjacent Green Ribbon Trail

D. Implementation

In addition to recommending a list of walking and bicycling facilities, this study also includes an implementation plan to guide the Township in ongoing efforts to bring this recommended network to fruition. The implementation plan consists of a phasing plan, estimates of the costs associated with implementing each of the recommended facilities, and recommended sources of grant funding for each facility or group of facilities.

The phasing plan designates which facilities are the highest priority and should be undertaken first, which are second priority, third priority, fourth and fifth priority. Each of the phases is depicted on individual maps in Appendix A.

- Phase 1 involves the completion of a multi-use trail along Joshua Road between Flourtown Road and Stenton Avenue. This section of Joshua Road is narrow and carries a significant amount of large truck traffic from a nearby quarry. A trail parallel to Joshua road will provide a safe connection between the dense residential neighborhoods west of Flourtown Road and the Cross County Trail, soon to be built by Montgomery County.
- Phase 2 consists mostly of relatively easily achievable projects that would fill in gaps in sidewalks, and provide links to township parkland and to existing County trails. Phase 2 Projects are clustered in two areas: the densely developed portion of the Township west of Flourtown Road, and the neighborhood along Bethlehem Pike east of Flourtown Road. By the time the second phase is completed, most Township residents will have access to some portion of the Montgomery County Trail network.
- Phase 3 continues to build upon the progress made in previous phases. Included are challenging sidepaths along narrow and heavily traveled roads, e.g. Joshua Road west of Ridge Pike. Additionally, other convenient sidewalk and trail links are included in this phase.
- Phases 4 and 5 consist of the remainder of the network. Included in these later phases is the construction of the “Sierra Club Trail” through the westernmost part of Whitemarsh Township. Envisioned since the mid-1970s, this planned footpath follows a power line right-of-way as it clings to the steep hillsides above the Schuylkill River. Hikers will be rewarded with dramatic views of the Schuylkill River valley from vantage points not accessible by automobile. *It should be noted that placing projects in the later phases does not mean that no action should be taken toward their*

implementation until all other phases are complete. Rather, it is a recognition that these facilities will take considerable time and effort to complete and will probably be among the last links completed. Nonetheless, the Township should pursue opportunities relating to these projects whenever they present themselves.

E. Summary of Opinion of Probable Cost

Cost estimates for the facilities recommended in this plan are discussed beginning on page 28 and are shown in detail in a table contained in Appendix B. The total cost of the network is estimated to be approximately \$9.8 million. In general, each phase becomes progressively more expensive to implement, with Phase 1 the least expensive and Phase 5 the most expensive. These costs are summarized in the table below.

The vast majority of these implementation costs will be paid by grant funds, with the Township paying very little and often contributing design and engineering work but no direct funding. There are a variety of grants available for trail construction, with some grants being more applicable to some types of projects and other grants more applicable to other types of facilities. The range of available funding sources is discussed in detail, beginning on page 29.

Miles of Proposed Network								
Phase	Neighborhood Street	Multi-use Trail (Ped/Bike)	Trail/Footpath (Earthen)	Sidepath (Gravel or Asphalt)	Sidewalk	On-Road Bike Route (Signed)	Bike Lanes	Cost
1	0.0	0.8	3.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	\$768,455
2	1.8	0.6	0.0	0.5	4.0	0.8	2.7	\$1,238,632
3	0.2	2.2	0.1	0.8	2.2	4.5	0.8	\$2,152,533
4	0.0	2.7	0.0	4.1	0.0	1.3	0.0	\$2,655,094
5	0.0	4.6	0.0	1.4	0.0	10.4	2.1	\$2,940,396
TOTAL	2.0	10.9	3.1	6.9	6.2	16.9	5.5	\$9,755,110