

History and Archaeology of Ancient Israel” at the Museum of the Bible, Washington, District of Columbia, and at possible additional exhibitions or venues yet to be determined, are of cultural significance, and, further, that their temporary exhibition or display within the United States as aforementioned is in the national interest. I have ordered that Public Notice of these determinations be published in the **Federal Register**.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Reed Liriano, Program Coordinator, Office of the Legal Adviser, U.S. Department of State (telephone: 202-632-6471; email: section2459@state.gov). The mailing address is U.S. Department of State, L/PD, 2200 C Street NW (SA-5), Suite 5H03, Washington, DC 20522-0505.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The foregoing determinations were made pursuant to the authority vested in me by the Act of October 19, 1965 (79 Stat. 985; 22 U.S.C. 2459), Executive Order 12047 of March 27, 1978, the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998 (112 Stat. 2681, *et seq.*; 22 U.S.C. 6501 note, *et seq.*), Delegation of Authority No. 234 of October 1, 1999, Delegation of Authority No. 236-3 of August 28, 2000, and Delegation of Authority No. 523 of December 22, 2021.

Nicole L. Elkon,

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Professional and Cultural Exchanges, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Department of State.

[FR Doc. 2024-16254 Filed 7-23-24; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4710-05-P

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

Release of Waybill Data

The Surface Transportation Board has received a request from the Harris County Toll Road Authority (WB24-30-6/17/24) for permission to use select data from the Board’s 2022 Unmasked Carload Waybill Samples. A copy of this request may be obtained from the Board’s website under docket no. WB24-30.

The waybill sample contains confidential railroad and shipper data; therefore, if any parties object to these requests, they should file their objections with the Director of the Board’s Office of Economics within 14 calendar days of the date of this notice. The rules for release of waybill data are codified at 49 CFR 1244.9.

Contact: Alexander Dusenberry, (202) 245-0319.

Regena Smith-Bernard,

Clearance Clerk.

[FR Doc. 2024-16252 Filed 7-23-24; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4915-01-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Highway Administration

[Docket No. FHWA-2024-0056]

Notice of Intent To Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for a Proposed Highway Project, Centre County, PA

AGENCY: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Department of Transportation (DOT).

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement.

SUMMARY: The FHWA, in coordination with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) is issuing the Notice of Intent (NOI) to solicit comments and advise the public, agencies, and stakeholders that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be prepared to study potential improvements to US 322 also known as the State College Area Connector Project from Potters Mills, PA to Boalsburg, PA. The project identification number is 112784. This NOI should be reviewed together with the NOI Additional Project Information document, which contains important details about the proposed project and complements the information in this NOI.

DATES: Comments on the NOI or the NOI Additional Project Information document are to be received by FHWA through the methods below by August 23, 2024.

ADDRESSES: This NOI and the NOI Additional Project Information are also available in the docket referenced above at www.regulations.gov and on the project website located at www.penndot.pa.gov/SCAC. The NOI Additional Project Information document will be mailed upon request. Interested parties are invited to submit comments by any of the following methods:

Website: For access to the documents, go to the Federal eRulemaking Portal located at www.regulations.gov or the project website located at www.penndot.pa.gov/SCAC. Follow the online instructions for submitting comments.

Mailing address or for hand delivery or courier: Docket Management Facility, U.S. Department of Transportation, 1200

New Jersey Avenue SE, West Building Ground Floor, Room W12-140, Washington, DC 20590.

All submissions should include the agency name, the docket number that appears in the heading of this notice, and the project identification number. All comments received will be posted without change to www.regulations.gov, including any personal information provided. A summary of the comments will be included in the Draft EIS.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

FHWA: Julia Moore, Senior Environmental Specialist, Federal Highway Administration, Pennsylvania Division Office, 30 North Third Street, Suite 700, Harrisburg, PA 17101; Julia.Moore@dot.gov; 717-221-4585. PennDOT: Eric Murnyack, PE, Project Manager, 70 PennDOT Drive, Clearfield, PA 16830; email emurnyack@pa.gov; 814-765-0435.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: It is important to note that the FHWA and PennDOT are committed to public involvement in this project. The FHWA, as Federal lead agency, and PennDOT, as project sponsor, are preparing an EIS to study potential improvements to US 322 also known as the State College Area Connector Project from Potters Mills, PA to Boalsburg, PA. All public comments received in response to this notice will be considered and potential revisions made to the information presented herein as appropriate. The environmental review of alternatives for the transportation project will be conducted in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321, *et seq.*), 23 U.S.C. 139, CEQ regulations implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500-1508), FHWA regulations implementing NEPA (23 CFR 771.101-771.139) and all applicable Federal, State, and local governmental laws and regulations.

Background. Within the State College Area Connector project area, there have been many transportation improvement studies and projects that have influenced travel within and immediately adjacent to the study area dating back to the 1970s. However, in the 1990s, key regional studies occurred which greatly influenced travel and development within the study area. The following provides a high-level summary of the local and regional transportation projects which have provided influence on the State College Area Connector project area.

Interstate 80:

○ I-80 was completed in Pennsylvania in 1970.

- I-80 through Pennsylvania influenced traffic patterns, particularly an increase in interstate truck traffic. This increase in traffic affected travel conditions within the project area.

- Roadway safety and quality of life in Centre County communities traversed by these roadways were influenced by the I-80 completion.

Interstate 99:

- US 220 study west of the State College area led to the development of a major improvement project for a new north-south interstate through Centre County that culminated with the construction of I-99 extending from Blair County to US 322 (the Mount Nittany Expressway).

- PA 26 corridor study resulted in the construction of I-99 from US 322 (the Mount Nittany Expressway) north towards I-80.

- I-80 Exit 161 (Bellefonte Interchange) is under development to replace the existing interchange with a new high-speed interchange and complete the I-99/I-80 connection. Construction of the interchange improvements will complete the goal for a major north-south interstate (I-99) through the center of the Commonwealth connecting two major east-west interstates, the Pennsylvania Turnpike (I-76) and I-80.

South Central Centre County Transportation Study (SCCCTS):

- SCCCTS was initiated in 1998 to evaluate and address transportation needs along the US 322, PA 144, and PA 45 corridors. The SCCCTS project needs identified specific transportation problems in each of the three corridors and on the local road system, as well as needs associated with regional travel patterns. The regional travel pattern need statement addressed the high percentage of through trips (in particular the high volume of truck traffic), high crash rates (including fatalities), poor Level of Service (LOS) (including LOS associated with heavy truck traffic) and increases in travel demand associated with local and regional planned development. However, SCCCTS was terminated in 2004 due to funding shortfalls and the NOI rescinded on July 29, 2019.

Safety Improvements:

- Following the termination of SCCCTS in 2004, short-term safety improvements along the US 322 were conducted between 2006 and 2015. These improvements included general intersection improvements (e.g., turn lanes), safety improvements (e.g., safety dot warning pavement markings, removal of passing zones), minor roadway realignments, and bridge reconstruction. These improvements

were initiated to address some of the safety concerns identified during the SCCCTS study.

Potters Mills Gap (PMG)

Transportation Project:

- PennDOT and FHWA initiated the PMG Transportation Project to improve a 3.75-mile-long section of US 322 in Potter Township within the area locally known as "Potters Mills Gap". This project area encompassed the southeastern portion of the SCCCTS study area. It was determined that this project had independent utility and addressed a defined purpose and need. The project included the construction of a new limited access four-lane roadway section that started at the Sand Mountain Road intersection and extended west, tying back into existing US 322 with a new interchange and roundabout, west of the PA 144/US 322 intersection.

SCCCTS Data Refresh:

- In 2018, PennDOT collected data to update the traffic and environmental information from the former SCCCTS (2004), to identify changes to travel patterns, the transportation network, and environmental conditions. This information supported the 2019 decision by State officials to restart efforts to address regional transportation needs in the US 322, PA 44, and PA 45 area. Nearly, \$15 million in State funding was allocated to advance the State College Area Connector Study.

State College Area Connector Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study:

- In 2020, PennDOT, in cooperation with FHWA and coordination with the Centre County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), initiated the State College Area Connector PEL Study. The PEL process promoted early coordination with the public as well as Federal, State, and local agencies in a transparent and collaborative environment that identified and evaluated transportation needs in the area, and developed and evaluated alternatives while considering community concerns in transportation decision-making early in the planning process. The PEL study identified a range of alternatives and screened them against the purpose and need and potential for environmental impacts. Three Build Alternatives corridors were recommended for further study. These three recommended Build Alternatives and a refined study area are being advanced for NEPA study with a Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS.

The following information provided in the NOI is supplemented with more detail in the NOI Additional Project Information document.

(a) Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action

The purpose of this project is to improve roadway congestion by achieving acceptable LOS and to address safety issues by reducing the predicted crash frequency along the US 322 corridor between Potters Mills and Boalsburg. Additionally, the project will aim to provide a transportation network that meets driver expectations.

The preliminary needs identified for the project are that high peak hour traffic volumes cause congestion and result in unacceptable LOS (LOS D [rural only], E, or F) on US 322 roadways and intersections; the existing roadway configurations and traffic conditions contribute to safety concerns in the project area; and the roadway network and configuration in the project area lacks continuity and does not meet driver expectations.

The project purpose and needs were first presented as part of the Pre-NOI/PEL phase of project development and were presented to the State and Federal resource agencies at an agency coordination meeting in July 2020 and to public officials and the general public at a virtual meeting in October 2020. Resource agencies and the public were invited to comment on the Purpose and Need. The purpose and need statements were refined following the PEL study for the US 322 project area. The project-specific purpose and needs were presented to the resource agencies in January 2024. The purpose and needs and supporting documentation, including data and public input summary, will be available in the Draft EIS. No specific comments were received from any of the resource agencies.

(b) A Preliminary Description of the Proposed Action and Alternatives the Environmental Impact Statement Will Consider

As concluded in the PEL Study, the proposed action is anticipated to include construction of an approximately 8-mile four-lane limited access facility from the end of US 322/ Mount Nittany Expressway in Boalsburg to the newly constructed limited access portion of US 322 at Potters Mills in Centre County, Pennsylvania. Agencies and the public are invited to comment on the Range of Alternatives for the proposed action. Additional information on the Range of Alternatives is in the NOI Additional Project Information document. The Range of Alternatives proposed to be considered in the EIS include the following:

No Build Alternative

The No Build Alternative involves taking no action, except routine maintenance and other small projects currently listed in the Centre County Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The existing two-lane alignment of US 322 between Potters Mills Gap and Boalsburg, Pennsylvania would remain. No new alignments or roadway improvements would be constructed.

Build Alternative—US 322–1S

The US 322–1S Build Alternative (US 322–1S) would have logical termini at the US 322 (Mt. Nittany Expressway) in Boalsburg and US 322 at Potters Mills Gap. US 322–1S would begin at the existing US 322 interchange with PA 45 near Boalsburg and follow existing US 322 to a point east of the Elks Club Road/Bear Meadows Road intersection. In this area, a two-lane service road would be provided on the north side of the limited access highway to provide connectivity to the local road network. US 322–1S would shift off existing US 322 to the north until it crosses south over US 322 near Neff Road in Tusseyville. The alternative would parallel US 322 to the south before connecting to the newly constructed US 322/PA 144 interchange at Potters Mills Gap. The Build Alternative US 322–1S would be 8.3 miles long.

Build Alternative—US 322–1OEX

The US 322–1OEX Build Alternative (US 322–1OEX) is a hybrid of US 322–1S that attempts to maximize the use of the existing US 322 right-of-way. US 322–1OEX would have logical termini at the US 322 (Mt. Nittany Expressway) in Boalsburg and US 322 at Potters Mills Gap. US 322–1OEX would begin at the existing US 322 interchange with PA 45 near Boalsburg and follow existing US 322 to a point east of the Elks Club Road/Bear Meadows Road intersection. In this area, a two-lane service road would be provided on the north side of the limited access highway to provide connectivity to the local road network. US 322–1OEX would shift off existing US 322 to the north until it crosses back to US 322 near Neff Road in Tusseyville. From there it would follow existing US 322 to the newly constructed US 322/PA 144 interchange at Potters Mills Gap, with the inclusion of a two-lane service road to maintain local access for properties adjacent to the new limited access facility. US 322–1OEX would be 8.3 miles long.

Build Alternative—US 322–5

The US 322–5 Build Alternative (US 322–5) would have logical termini at the US 322 (Mt. Nittany Expressway) in

Boalsburg and US 322 at Potters Mills Gap. US 322–5 would begin at the existing US 322 interchange with PA 45 near Boalsburg and follow existing US 322 to a point east of the Elks Club Road/Bear Meadows Road intersection. A two-lane service road on the north side of the limited access highway would connect to the local road network. US 322–5 would turn southeast off the existing US 322 corridor near Tait Road, and proceed east along the lower slope of Tussey Mountain, paralleling US 322. The corridor would continue paralleling US 322 to the south, crossing over Church Hill Road, Dogtown Road, and Mountain Back Road and connect to the newly constructed US 322/PA 144 interchange at Potters Mills Gap. US 322–5 would be 8.4 miles long.

(c) Brief Summary of Expected Impacts

As part of the PEL process, PennDOT conducted scoping activities for the State College Area Connector Project. Resource data was collected from publicly available web based existing maps and data; direct coordination with various Federal, State, and local government agencies; select site reconnaissance; coordination with private organizations; and public input. This information was used to identify the types of environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic resources present and those likely to be affected. The following resources will be evaluated in the EIS and supporting technical studies: cultural resources (archaeology and historic architecture); hazardous materials; air quality; greenhouse gases and climate change; noise-sensitive areas; natural resources (wildlife and habitat; threatened, endangered, and special concern species; waters of the US; water quality; groundwater; floodplains; and farmlands), visual resources; section 4(f) resources (public recreational facilities, historic properties, and State Game Lands); and socioeconomic resources (communities and community facilities, population and housing, economic resources, land use and right-of-way, and environmental justice). Potential direct, indirect, and cumulative effects will be assessed and documented in the EIS. Preliminary review of the existing conditions with or adjacent to the Build Alternative corridors for the project could result in effects to the following:

- *Environmental Justice*: Minority and/or low-income (environmental justice) populations have been identified within the vicinity of the Project, specifically within Harris Township. An assessment of the potential for disproportionate and

adverse effects on environmental justice populations will be conducted, as described in section 4 of the NOI Additional Project Information document.

- *Regional and local economies*: Within the vicinity of the Project, there are industrial and commercial centers, and agricultural farm businesses. Industrial and commercial centers are clustered along existing US 322 in portions of Potter Township and Harris Township. Agricultural farm businesses are concentrated in the center and eastern portion of the project area. An assessment of the Project's potential effects on regional and local economies will be conducted,

- *Wetland and surface waters*: State and Federal regulated freshwater wetlands and waterways are present in the vicinity of the Project, including but not limited to Sinking Creek, Spring Creek, Boal Gap Run, Sleepy Creek, Galbraith Gap Run, and associated tributaries. A surface water and wetland delineation will be conducted to identify all State-regulated wetlands and Waters of the U.S. within and adjacent to the Build Alternative corridors. An assessment of the Project's potential effects on wetlands and surface waters will be conducted,

- *Threatened and endangered species*: Federally and State-listed threatened and/or endangered species have the potential to occur within the vicinity of the Project. A Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory (PNDI) search was completed to determine potential threatened and endangered species resources within or adjacent to the Build Alternative corridors. The following species were identified in the search:

- Plant State Species Only
 - Serviceberry (proposed endangered)
 - Long-fruited anemone (endangered)
 - Tall gramma (endangered)
 - Roundleaf services (proposed endangered)
 - Brome grass (proposed threatened)
 - Bebb's sedge (endangered/proposed threatened)
 - Hansom sedge (endangered)
 - Prairie sedge (threatened)
 - Heller's witchgrass (proposed threatened)
 - Vetchling (proposed endangered)
 - Grooved yellow flax (endangered)
 - False gromwell (endangered)
 - Hard-leafed goldenrod (proposed endangered)
 - Mountain starwort (proposed threatened)
 - Tufted buttercup (endangered)
 - Northeastern bulrush (endangered/proposed threatened)

- Declined trillium (proposed threatened)
- Mammal Species
 - Indiana Bat (Federal endangered)
 - Northern Long-eared Bat (Federal endangered)
 - Tri-colored Bat (Federal proposed endangered)
 - Eastern Small-footed Bat (State threatened)
- Reptile Species
 - Timber rattlesnake (State protected species)
- Aquatic Species
 - Triangle floater (State protected species)

Coordination with the resource agencies also noted concerns for migratory bird species and bat hibernacula in the area. An assessment of the Project's potential effects on threatened and endangered species will be conducted and coordination with the resource agencies conducted, accordingly.

- *Farmland*: Productive agricultural land and farmland soils pursuant to the Farmland Protection Policy Act are present in the vicinity of the Project. Agricultural evaluations will be conducted including secondary source data collection and farmer interviews. An assessment of the Project's potential effects on productive agricultural land and farmland soils will be conducted.

- *Historic properties*: A reconnaissance survey was conducted for resources within or adjacent to the Build Alternative corridors. The survey included a review of the Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission's files of resources identified as listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), and limited field investigation to identify properties potentially eligible for inclusion in the NRHP. An Area of Potential Effects (APE) will be established for the Project and an assessment will be conducted to identify the potential effects on historic properties. Coordination with the State Historic Preservation Office and interested parties will be included as part of the effect's findings.

- *Visual resources*: Visually sensitive resources are present in the vicinity of the Project, including but not limited to historic properties including the Penns Valley/Brush Valley Rural Historic District, and Rothrock State Forest. An assessment of the Project's potential effects on visual resources will be conducted.

- *Air quality*: The project lies in Centre County, Pennsylvania which is currently designated as a maintenance area under the 1997 8-hour ozone

NAAQS. Centre County is in attainment for all other criteria pollutants for which NAAQS are established. An assessment of the Project's potential effects on air quality will be conducted.

- *Traffic noise*: Noise sensitive receptors, as described in 23 CFR part 772, are present within the vicinity of the Project and include, but are not limited to residences and trails. An assessment of the Project's potential effects on traffic noise will be conducted.

- *Construction effects*: Construction of the Project has the potential to affect noise, air quality, traffic and transportation, local and regional economies, water quality, and other environmental resources. Construction effects would be temporary and would cease with the completion of construction. An assessment of the Project's potential construction-related effects will be conducted.

The analyses and evaluations conducted for the EIS will identify the potential for construction-related (short-term) and operational (long-term) effects (direct, indirect, and cumulative); whether the anticipated effects would be adverse; and mitigation measures for adverse effects. Evaluations under section 4(f) of the USDOT Act of 1966, 23 CFR part 774, and section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965, 54 U.S.C. 200302, will be prepared, and consultation under section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 54 U.S.C. 300101–307108, will be undertaken concurrently with the NEPA process. Additional information on the expected impacts is provided in the NOI Additional Project Information document available for review in the docket established for this project and on the project website as noted in the **ADDRESSES** section. Comments on the expected effects to be analyzed in the Draft EIS (DEIS) are welcomed during the NOI comment period. The identification of environmental effects for analysis in the DEIS may be revised due to the consideration of public comments.

(d) Anticipated Permits, Other Authorizations, and Cooperating and Participating Agencies

A Clean Water Act Section 404 permit decision from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is anticipated in September 2026. Other anticipated State authorizations include a Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) Section 401 Water Quality Certification/Chapter 105 Standard Permit in August 2026. Section 7 consultation under the Endangered

Species Act is expected to be concluded in September 2025, and Section 106 consultation under the National Historic Preservation Act is anticipated to be concluded in December 2024. A U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966, Individual Section 4(f) authorization is anticipated in April 2026. See the NOI Additional Project Information document for more detail on the anticipated permits and other authorizations. Cooperating Agencies include the USACE, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Environmental Protection Agency, Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office, and PADEP. Participating Agencies include the PA Fish and Boat Commission, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, PA Game Commission, PA Department of Agriculture, Centre County Conservation District, Centre County Board of Commissioners, Harris Township Board of Supervisors, College Township Council, Seneca Nation of Indians, and Delaware Tribe of Indians.

(e) Scoping and Public Review

Agency Scoping

PennDOT has conducted agency coordination to inform the purpose and need and preliminary project alternatives, scoping meeting, and other elements outlined in this document. An Agency Coordination Plan was reviewed and agreed to by the Pennsylvania resource agencies, including the Cooperating and Participating agencies. It is a living document that will be updated through the EIS process. The resource agency meetings in Pennsylvania are referred to as Agency Coordination Meetings (ACM). Since PennDOT is the lead agency for this project, the agency meetings are typically held on the ACM's regularly scheduled meeting dates. A total of 12 agency coordination meetings were held between February 2020 and January 2024.

Public Review

PennDOT conducted public outreach activities during the PEL Study for the State College Area Connector to present information and collect public input. The PEL Study had a Public and Agency Coordination Plan which provided the foundation for the outreach activities.

Additionally, PennDOT conducted four public open house meetings. These meetings solicited public comment on the presented information which included:

- Virtual Open House Meeting—October 2020
 - overview of the transportation development process

- PEL Study process
- environmental resources
- engineering and traffic data
- purpose and need.
- Open House Public Meeting—September 21 and 22, 2021
 - PEL Study process
 - range of alternative concepts
 - Upgrade Existing and Build Alternative corridor concepts
 - alternative screening process
 - preliminary environmental and traffic analysis.
- Open House Public Meeting—April 5 and 6, 2022
 - environmental data collection efforts
 - traffic analyses
 - Upgrade Existing and Build Alternative corridor refinements
 - key resource and alternative changes since September 2021 meetings.
- Open House Public Meeting—October 19 and 20, 2022
 - PEL Study Report draft recommendations for alternatives to move forward
 - potential environmental and traffic impacts/benefits.

In addition, public official kick-off meetings were held in August, September, and November 2020 (Harris Township/August 10, Centre Hall Borough/August 13, Potter Township/August 17, College Township/August 20, Benner Township/September 3, Spring Township/September 8, Centre County/November 24, 2020). These meetings introduced the data presented in the Virtual Open House Meeting.

Combined public official meetings were also held:

- August 31, 2021, in advance of the September 2021 open house meeting.
- March 30, 2022, in advance of the of the April 2022 open house meeting.
- September 7, 2022, in advance of the October 2022 open house meetings.

The public and agency scoping process is continuing with the publication of this NOI. PennDOT will maintain and update the project website, as identified in the **ADDRESSES** section of this notice, to direct the public to the Final State College Area Connector Planning and Environmental Linkages Report and associated scoping documents and solicit public input. Additionally, PennDOT will continue to conduct targeted outreach to communities in and around the project area. A 30-day public comment period is being held in association with the publication of the NOI in the **Federal Register**. There will be at least three more public involvement opportunities for the State College Area Connector

Project. During project Scoping, there will be two public open house meetings. The first Scoping public open house meeting will occur after the NOI is issued and will present detailed traffic analysis, updated environmental features, and preliminary engineering alignment alternatives. The second Scoping public open house meeting will be held following alternative refinement and identification of a draft recommended preferred alternative. This public open house meeting will also present the revised preliminary alignment alternatives, associated potential environmental effects, and conceptual mitigation. Lastly, following the issuance of the Notice of Availability of the Draft EIS, a public hearing with an option for multiple nights, if necessary, will be held. Refer to the Coordination Plan for Public Involvement for more information.

(f) Schedule for the Decision-Making Process

Following the issuance of this notice, FHWA and PennDOT will coordinate with the Participating and Cooperating Agencies to develop study documentation and the Draft EIS.

- The Draft EIS is anticipated to be issued in July 2025.
- The combined Final EIS/Record of Decision is anticipated in July 2026.
- A section 404 permit decision from the USACE is expected in September 2026.

See the NOI Additional Project Information document for schedule details.

(g) Request for Identification of Potential Alternatives, Information, and Analyses Relevant to the Proposed Action

To ensure that a full range of issues related to the project are addressed and all potential issues are identified, FHWA invites comments and suggestions from all interested parties. The project team requests comments and suggestions on purpose and needs, potential alternatives and impacts, and the identification of any relevant information, studies, or analyses of any kind concerning impacts affecting the quality of the human environment. Any information presented herein, including the project-specific purpose and need, preliminary range of alternatives and identification of impacts may be revised after consideration of the comments. The purpose of this request is to bring relevant comments, information, and analyses to the agency's attention, as early in the process as possible, to enable the agency to make maximum use of this information in decision

making. Comments may be submitted according to the instructions in the **ADDRESSES** section of this notice.

(h) Contact Information

FHWA: Julia Moore, Senior Environmental Specialist, Federal Highway Administration, Pennsylvania Division, 30 North Third Street, Suite 700, Harrisburg, PA 17101; email Julia.Moore@dot.gov; 717-221-4585.

Pennsylvania Department of Transportation: Eric Murnyack, PE, Project Manager, 70 PennDOT Drive, Clearfield, PA 16830; email emurnyack@pa.gov; 814-765-0435.

Jennifer Maureen Crobak,
*Director of Planning, Environment, Finance,
Federal Highway Administration.*

[FR Doc. 2024-16257 Filed 7-23-24; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Highway Administration

Notice of Final Federal Agency Actions on Proposed Transportation Project in Maryland

AGENCY: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice of limitation on claims for judicial review of actions by FHWA and other Federal agencies.

SUMMARY: This notice announces action taken by FHWA and other Federal agencies that are final. The actions relate to the Rebuild of the I-695 (Baltimore Beltway) Francis Scott Key Bridge over Patapsco River and its approaches. The actions grant licenses, permits, or approvals for the Project. The emergency Categorical Exclusion (CE) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other documents in the Project file provide details on the Project and FHWA's actions.

DATES: By this notice, FHWA is advising the public of final agency actions subject to 23 U.S.C. 139(l)(1). A claim seeking judicial review of the Federal agency actions on the highway project will be barred unless the claim is filed on or before December 23, 2024. If the Federal law that authorizes judicial review of a claim provides a time period of less than 150 days for filing such claim, then that shorter time period still applies.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Valeriya Remezova, Division Administrator, Federal Highway Administration, 31 Hopkins Plaza, Suite 1520, Baltimore, MD 21201, Telephone (410) 962-4440.

Notice of Intent Additional Project Information Document

State College Area Connector Project Environmental Impact Statement

This Notice of Intent (NOI) Additional Project Information document supplements the NOI published in the Federal Register. This document contains detailed plans for an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that will be prepared to study potential improvements to US 322 also known as the State College Area Connector project. The project includes the proposed construction of an approximately 8-mile four-lane limited access facility from the end of US 322/Mount Nittany Expressway in Boalsburg to the newly constructed limited access portion of US 322 at Potters Mills in Centre County, Pennsylvania. The NOI Additional Project Information document and the NOI published in the Federal Register should be read together. Agencies, stakeholders, and the public are invited to comment on the Environmental Analysis Methodologies, Preliminary Purpose and Need, Preliminary Range of Alternatives, or any other aspect of the proposed action. Instructions for submitting comments may be found in the NOI. Comments must be received within 30 days after the date of the NOI publication in the Federal Register.

Project Identification #: 112784

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APPENDIX C – COORDINATION PLAN FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Project Description

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), is initiating National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) activities as part of an EIS for an 8-mile 4-lane limited-access facility from the end of US 322/Mount Nittany Expressway in Boalsburg to the newly constructed limited access portion of US 322 at Potters Mills in Centre County, Pennsylvania. The intent of this project is to build upon the State College Area Connector Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) document that evaluated a range of alternatives, and through a quantitative and qualitative screening process identified three Build Alternative corridor options for further study in NEPA and established the NEPA project area (**Figure 1**).

Subsequent to the PEL completion, additional traffic investigations and analysis and coordination with local officials for the State College Area Connector project determined that the connector road and interior interchange (included in each of the PEL US 322 Build Alternatives) would provide some localized improvements to PA 45. However, it was determined that the connector road and associated interchange was not necessary to address the project's purpose and need, nor did it address corridor wide issues along PA 45. As a result, the proposed interior interchange and local road connection was removed from this State College Area Connector project and will be considered in the independent PA 45 Corridor Improvements project, as appropriate. The State College Area Connector project will advance independently but will not preclude the inclusion of a future interior interchange and local road connection should the independent safety study along PA 45 determine that it would be beneficial in connection with other proposed PA 45 Corridor Improvements project. **Figure 2** provides the revised project area for the State College Area Connector project that will move forward for alternative development and investigation.

1.2. Project History

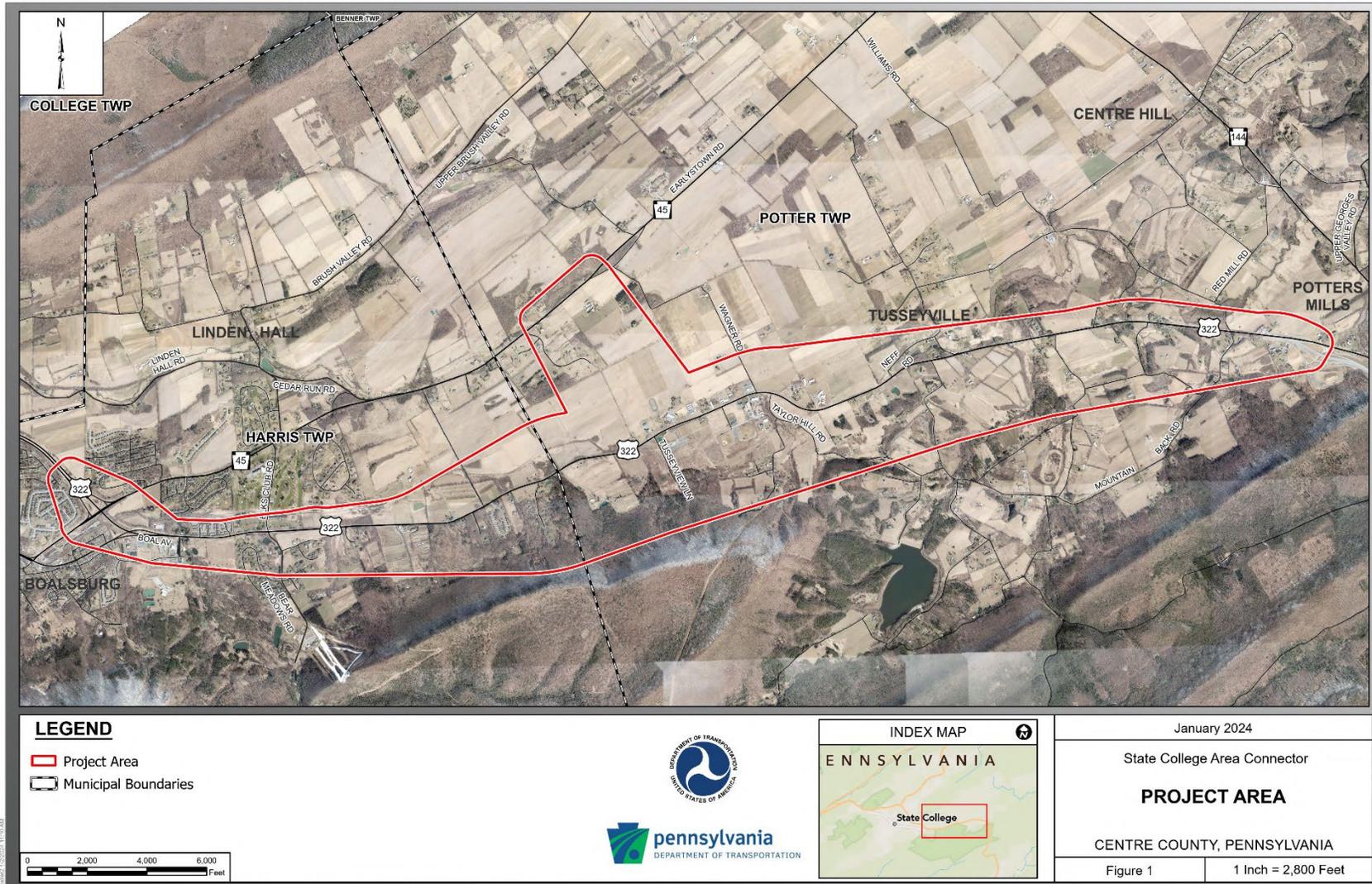
Within the State College Area Connector project area, there have been many transportation improvement studies and projects that have influenced travel within and immediately adjacent to the project area dating back to the 1970s. However, in the 1990s, key regional studies occurred which greatly influenced travel and development within the project area. The following provides a high-level summary of the local and regional transportation projects which have provided influence on the State College Area Connector project area.

Interstate 80

- I-80 was completed in Pennsylvania in 1970.
- I-80 through Pennsylvania influenced traffic patterns, particularly an increase in interstate truck traffic. This increase in traffic affected travel conditions within the project area.
- Roadway safety and quality of life in Centre County communities traversed by these roadways were influenced by the I-80 completion.

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Interstate 99

- US 220 study west of the State College area led to the development of a major improvement project for a new north-south interstate through Centre County that culminated with the construction of I-99 extending from Blair County to US 322 (the Mount Nittany Expressway).
- PA 26 corridor study resulted in the construction of I-99 from US 322 (the Mount Nittany Expressway) north towards I-80.
- I-80 Exit 161 (Bellefonte Interchange) is under development to replace the existing interchange with a new high-speed interchange and complete the I-99/I-80 connection. Construction of the interchange improvements will complete the goal for a major north-south interstate (I-99) through the center of the Commonwealth connecting two major east-west interstates, the Pennsylvania Turnpike (I-76) and I-80.

South Central Centre County Transportation Study (SCCCTS)

- SCCCTS was initiated in 1998 to evaluate and address transportation needs along the US 322, PA 144, and PA 45 corridors. The SCCCTS project needs identified specific transportation problems in each of the three corridors and on the local road system, as well as needs associated with regional travel patterns. The regional travel pattern need statement addressed the high percentage of through trips (in particular the high volume of truck traffic), high crash rates (including fatalities), poor Level of Service (LOS) (including LOS associated with heavy truck traffic) and increases in travel demand associated with local and regional planned development. However, SCCCTS was terminated in 2004 due to funding shortfalls and the NOI rescinded on July 29, 2019.

Safety Improvements

- Following the termination of SCCCTS in 2004, short-term safety improvements along the US 322 corridor were conducted between 2006 and 2015. These improvements included general intersection improvements (e.g., turn lanes), safety improvements (e.g., safety dot warning pavement markings, removal of passing zones), minor roadway realignments, and bridge reconstruction. These improvements were initiated to address some of the safety concerns identified during the SCCCTS study.

Potters Mills Gap (PMG) Transportation Project

- PennDOT and FHWA initiated the PMG Transportation Project to improve a 3.75-mile-long section of US 322 in Potter Township within the area locally known as “Potters Mills Gap”. This project area encompassed the southeastern portion of the SCCCTS study area. It was determined that this project had independent utility and addressed a defined purpose and need. The project included the construction of a new limited access four-lane roadway section that started at the Sand Mountain Road intersection and extended west, tying back into existing US 322 with a new interchange and roundabout, west of the PA 144/US 322 intersection.

SCCCTS Data Refresh

- In 2018, PennDOT collected data to update the traffic and environmental information from the former SCCCTS (2004), to identify changes to travel patterns, the transportation network, and environmental conditions. This information supported the 2019 decision by state officials to restart efforts to address regional transportation needs in the US 322,

PA 44, and PA 45 area. Nearly, \$15 million in state funding was allocated to advance the State College Area Connector Study.

State College Area Connector Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study

- In 2020, PennDOT, in cooperation with FHWA and coordination with the Centre County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), initiated the State College Area Connector PEL Study. The PEL process promoted early coordination with the public as well as federal, state, and local agencies in a transparent and collaborative environment that identified and evaluated transportation needs in the area and developed and evaluated alternatives while considering community concerns in transportation decision-making early in the planning process. The PEL study identified a range of alternatives and screened them against the purpose and need and potential for environmental effects. Three Build Alternatives corridors were recommended for further study. These three recommended Build Alternatives and a refined study area are being advanced for NEPA study with a Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS.

2. PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

2.1. Project Purpose

The purpose of this project is to improve roadway congestion by achieving acceptable LOS and to address safety issues by reducing the predicted crash frequency along the US 322 corridor between Potters Mills and Boalsburg. Additionally, the project will aim to provide a transportation network that meets driver expectations.

2.2. Project Need

Within the project area, there are transportation issues associated with high levels of congestion, potential safety issues along the roadway network, and a roadway network which presents a driver with changing roadway configurations. The following provides a summary of the needs statements and supporting documentation.

High peak hour traffic volumes cause congestion and result in unacceptable Level of Service (LOS) (LOS D [rural only], E, or F) on US 322 roadways and intersections.

- US 322 serves as the main travel route for local, regional, and interstate traffic, including trucks, within the project area. Currently during peak hours, US 322, between the US 322 Mount Nittany Expressway and the Mountain Back Road/Red Mill Road intersection (just west of Potters Mills), operates at a LOS D or E. The 2050 peak hour traffic volumes are anticipated to increase 41% which will increase congestion and worsen the LOS along the US 322 corridor. In 2050, LOS E is still anticipated for the entire US 322 corridor from the Mount Nittany Expressway to Potters Mills Gap, and travel speed will be further decreased with an average travel speed 15% less than the posted speed limit.
- Unsignalized intersections along US 322 are anticipated to operate at unacceptable LOS (LOS D, E, or F) due to high volumes of traffic along the uncontrolled main roadway which limit the availability of gaps in the traffic for making turning movements.
- US 322 averages three times more truck traffic within the project area in comparison to other similar roadways statewide, and truck traffic is expected to increase by 27% along

the corridor by 2050. The additional truck traffic increases overall congestion and contributes to unacceptable levels of service.

Existing roadway configurations and traffic conditions contribute to safety concerns in the project area.

- Crashes were identified along a majority of the US 322 corridor with some concentrations at unsignalized intersections (e.g., Elks Club Road/Bear Meadows Road, Neff Road, and Red Mill Road/Mountain Back Road). Additionally, between 2017 and 2021, nearly 19% of all crashes along US 322 were caused by a heavy vehicle.
- The Highway Safety Manual (HSM) analysis results indicate the potential for safety improvements along a majority of the US 322 corridor and at unsignalized intersections through the project area. Increasing traffic along US 322 has reduced the number of gaps available for side street and driveway traffic attempting to enter or exit US 322. This causes drivers to make turning movements outside of their comfort zone which contributes to crashes at side streets and driveway intersections. Additionally, the large percentage of through traffic exacerbates the issue as these drivers may be unfamiliar with the roadway characteristics.

The roadway network and configuration in the project area lacks continuity and does not meet driver expectations.

- US 322 is on the National Highway System and is classified as a principal arterial that is intended to provide long-distance connections. US 322, adjacent to the project area (near both Potters Mills and Boalsburg), is a four-lane, limited-access, divided highway facility with exit and entrance ramps to provide access to the local roadway network. This type of roadway is conducive to higher travel speeds and supports regional and interstate travel patterns. These adjacent sections of US 322 feed traffic into the project area, where US 322 is currently a two-lane, non-divided highway with unrestricted access to driveways and intersecting roadways. The abrupt change in roadway configuration and characteristics creates a roadway network that lacks continuity of facility type and function.
- Within the project area, US 322 serves local, regional, and interstate traffic (including truck and commuter traffic). The road also services other travel modes including farm equipment traffic and bicycle traffic. The change in the roadway cross-section at both ends of the corridor creates inconsistencies which may not meet driver expectations, particularly for regional and interstate traffic. The potential for additional uncontrolled access points along US 322 would continue to degrade roadway continuity along the corridor and create additional locations for conflicts that could result in crashes.

The complete Purpose and Needs Report is included in **Appendix A**.

3. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

3.1. Alternative Development and Screening History

The PEL study developed and screened a range of alternatives. The range of alternatives represented a wide variety of possible concepts for reducing congestion, improving safety, and addressing system continuity throughout the study area. Fundamental study goals that supported the purpose and need, local transportation and land use planning, transportation mobility, best engineering practices, and environmental stewardship were developed to aid in assessing the alternatives.

The range of alternatives were systematically screened based on their ability to meet the identified study purpose and need, minimize environmental effects, satisfy required engineering and constructability criteria, and address the study goals. The screening process consisted of two levels of screening. If during the screening any alternative was determined to not meet the purpose and need it was dismissed from further consideration. The *Alternatives Analysis and Screening Report for the State College Area Connector Planning and Environmental Linkages Study*, *Engineering Technical Memorandum for the State College Area Connector Planning and Environmental Linkages Study*, and *Traffic Analysis Technical Memorandum for the State College Area Connector Planning and Environmental Linkages Study*¹ provide the supporting analysis for the alternative development and screening process.

Level 1 Screening – The Level 1 Screening included a qualitative assessment to determine if the alternative met the study need. All the alternatives that were dismissed from further study were found to not meet the identified transportation needs. **Table 1** provides a summary of the alternatives dismissed and advanced for future study.

Table 1: Level 1 Screening Summary

Alternatives Advanced	Alternatives Dismissed
Upgrade Existing Alternative	No-Build Alternative
Build Alternative	Transit Alternative
	Transportation System Management (TSM) Alternative
	Transportation Control Measure (TCM) Alternative

¹ These technical memoranda are available on the project website at www.pennDOT.gov/SCAC.

Level 2 Screening – The Level 2 screening level was divided into two parts: Level 2A and 2B.

Level 2A Screening – The Level 2A screening was conducted on the alternatives advanced from the Level 1 (**Table 1**). This screening was designed to qualitatively evaluate if the alternative would address the need to reduce traffic congestion on the local roadway network. Only the need to reduce congestion was evaluated during Level 2A. The need to improve safety and meet driver expectations were qualitatively confirmed during Level 1, so further evaluation of those topics was deferred until it was determined if an alternative could reduce traffic congestion. Two representative Build Alternative corridors, one along US 322 and one along PA 144, and an Upgrade Existing Alternative along US 322 were developed for Level 2A analysis.

The Level 2A Screening confirmed that both of the representative Build Alternative corridors and the Upgrade Existing Alternative along US 322 would reduce congestion. As a result, both alternatives were advanced for further development and evaluation in the Level 2B Screening.

Level 2B Screening – The Level 2B Screening started with the identification and development of Build Alternative corridor options and refinement of the Upgrade Existing Alternative along US 322. Specifically, nine Build Alternative corridors options (five corridors parallel to US 322 and three corridors parallel to PA 144) and one Upgrade Existing Alternative along US 322 were developed as shown on **Figure 3** and **Figure 4**.

The goal of the Level 2B Screening was to determine which alternative and/or which Build Alternative corridor options best met the study purpose and need, while considering public, agency, and stakeholder input and minimizing potential effects on the natural and built environments. Traffic, environmental, engineering, and planning analyses were conducted to determine the potential effects or benefits of the alternative corridors for each of the disciplines. Public input obtained during the four public meetings and other coordination activities as documented in the meeting summary reports was included as part of the planning analysis.

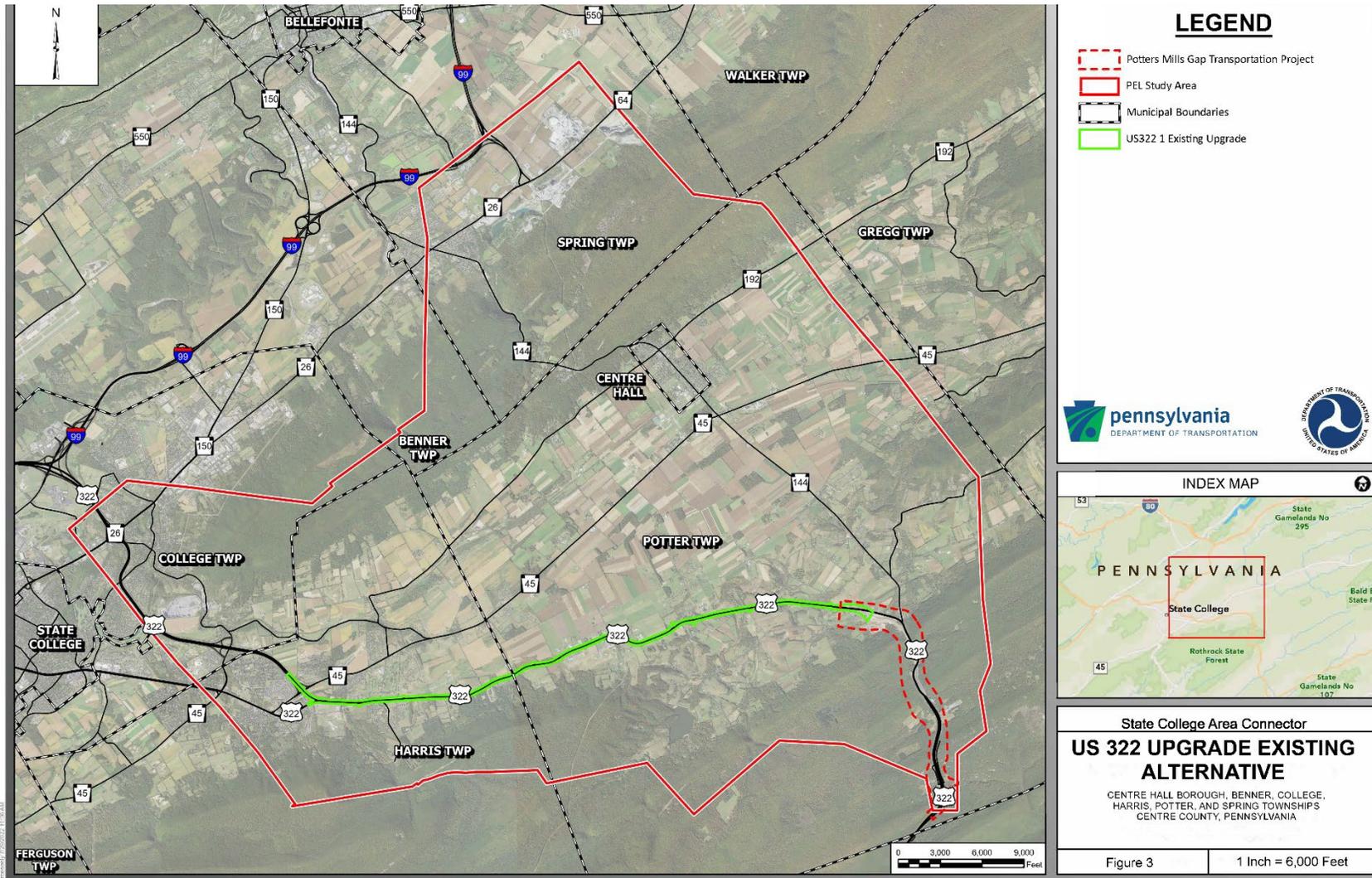
The Level 2B Screening results indicated that US 322 Upgrade Existing Alternative would not improve safety and therefore would not meet the study needs. As a result, it was dismissed from further study.

When looking at the nine Build Alternative corridor options, the Level 2B Screening determined that all the corridor options would meet the identified purpose and need for the study. However, it was determined that US 322-2, US 322-3, US 322-4, PA 144-1, PA 144-2, and PA-144-3 Build Alternative corridors would have excessive environmental, engineering, and planning effects when compared to other alternatives and were dismissed from further study. **Table 2** provides an overview of the reasons for dismissing these corridors.

The Level 2B Screening confirmed that when balancing the overall traffic, environmental, engineering, and planning data and analyses, the US 322-1OEX, US 322-1S, and US 322-5 Build Alternative corridors would meet the purpose and needs and would best minimize natural, cultural, socio-economic effects, address planning concerns, and minimize engineering issues. They were identified as reasonable alternatives to be carried forward for evaluating in the NEPA phase of the transportation project development process.

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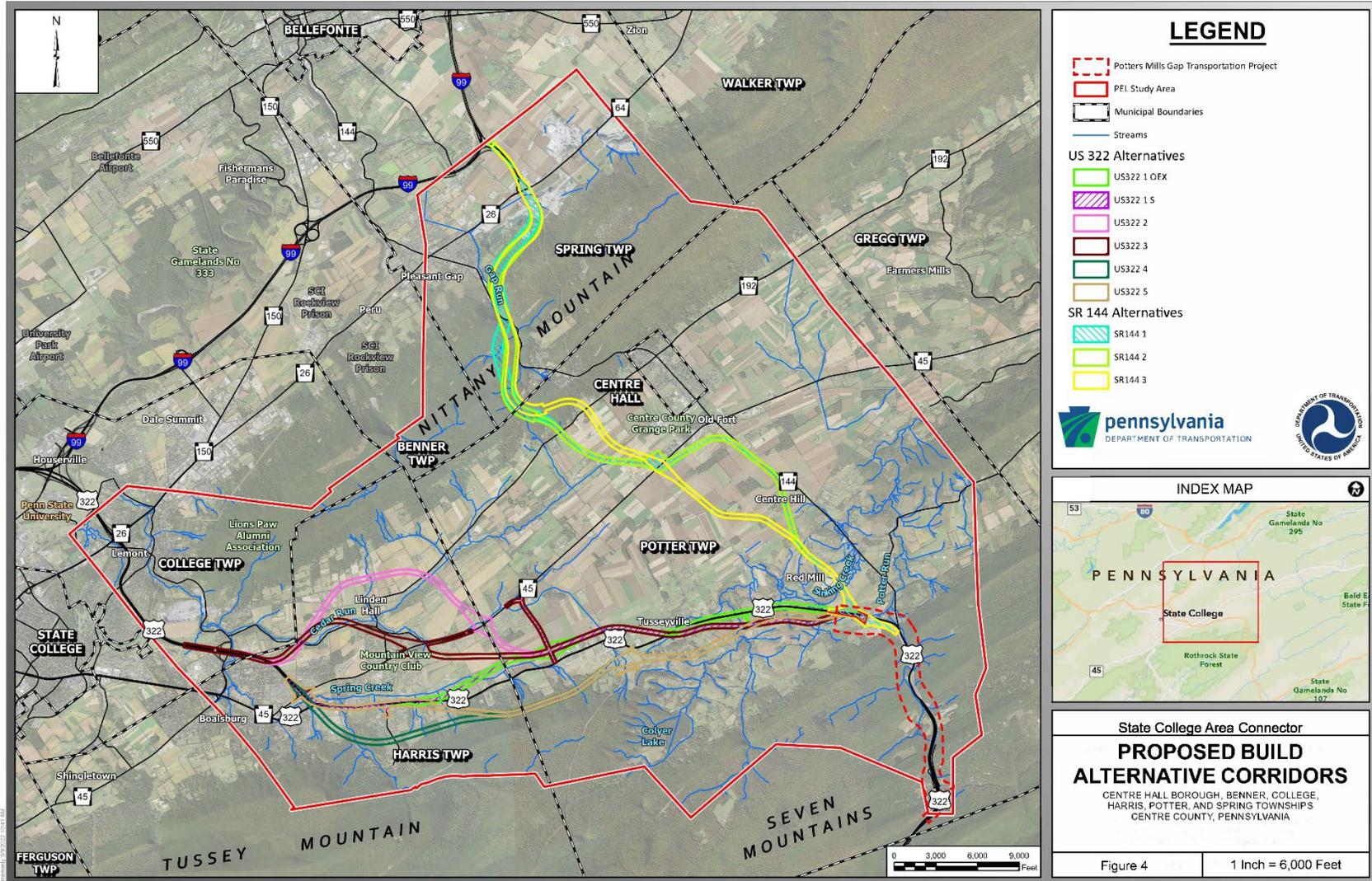


Table 2: Summary of Level 2B Dismissed Alternatives

Alternatives Dismissed	Reason for Dismissal
US 322 Upgrade Existing Alternative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failed to improve roadway safety • Failed to meet the purpose and needs
US 322-2 Build Alternative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dismissal reason based on the environmental, engineering, and planning analyses • Environmental Screening - higher potential effects to three of the five comparative environmental regulatory resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ most impactful to productive agricultural lands (361 acres) including Agricultural Security Areas (192 acres) and agricultural zoning (246 acres) which are subject to the Agricultural Lands Condemnation Approval Board (ALCAB) approval process ○ would have the potential to relocate 21 residential properties ○ would have the highest acreage effect on the Penns Valley/Brush Valley Rural Historic District (372 acres), a protected Section 4(f) resource • Planning Screening - extends away from the existing US 322 and current US 322 business district and potentially opens new areas for development that is not wanted locally as identified during outreach efforts and captured in summary reports • Engineering Screening - longest of the US 322 corridors with a higher comparative planning-level total cost estimate
US 322-3 Build Alternative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dismissal reason based on the environmental, engineering, and planning analyses • Environmental Screening – higher potential effects to three of the five comparative environmental regulatory resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ higher comparative effects on productive agricultural lands (313 acres) including Conservation Easements (39 acres) and agricultural zoning (212 acres) which are subject to the ALCAB approval process ○ highest number of potential residential relocations (29 homes) ○ higher comparative effects on the Penns Valley/Brush Valley Rural Historic District (331 acres), a protected Section 4(f) resource • Planning Screening - extends away from the existing US 322 and current US 322 business district and potentially opens new areas for development that is not wanted locally as identified during outreach efforts and captured in summary reports • Engineering Screening – second longest of the US 322 corridors with the highest comparative planning-level total cost estimate
US 322-4 Build Alternative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dismissal reason based on the environmental and planning analyses

Alternatives Dismissed	Reason for Dismissal
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Screening – higher potential effects to three of the five comparative environmental regulatory resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ higher comparative effects on regulated Waters of the US including 6 acres of wetlands and 9,124 linear feet of Cold Water Fishes (CWF)-High Quality (HQ)/ CWF streams ○ displaces four commercial facilities ○ highest effect on the Rothrock State Forest (part) and Stone Mountain Important Bird area (125 acres) • Planning Screening – affects the only remaining industrially zoned land in Harris Township and displaces existing businesses with no potential to relocate locally. Effects a community facility, Harvest Fields, which raised substantial community concerns
<p>PA 144-1 Build Alternative PA 144-2 Build Alternative</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dismissal reason based on the environmental, engineering, and planning analyses • Environmental Screening – higher potential effects in all five of the comparative environmental regulatory resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ higher comparative effects on regulated Waters of the US including 6 to 7 acres of wetlands ○ effects 129 to 130 acres of the public water supply well protection zone area for Centre Hall Borough and Potter Township ○ highest effect on bat swarming habitat (248 to 261 acres) and in proximity to two known bat caves ○ effects productive agricultural lands (294 to 296 acres) including Agricultural Security Areas (165 to 166 acres) and conservation easements (40 acres) which are subject to the ALCAB approval process ○ effects an historic resource • Planning Screening – effects the Centre Airpark and the public water supply protection zones • Engineering Screening – longest corridors with highest comparative planning-level total cost estimate
<p>PA 144-3 Build Alternative</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dismissal reason based on the environmental, engineering and planning analyses • Environmental Screening – higher potential effects in all five of the comparative environmental regulatory resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ highest comparative effects on regulated Waters of the US including 8 acres of wetlands ○ effects 103 acres of the public water supply well protection zone area for Centre Hall Borough and Potter Township ○ highest effect on the area bat swarming habitat (269 acres) and in proximity to two known bat caves ○ effects productive agricultural lands (268 acres) including Agricultural Security Areas (183 acres) and conservation

Alternatives Dismissed	Reason for Dismissal
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ easements (37 acres) which are subject to the ALCAB approval process ● Planning Screening – effects the Centre Airpark and the public water supply protection zones ● Engineering Screening – longer corridor with a higher comparative planning-level total cost estimate

3.2. Alternatives Recommended for NEPA Study

Since the completion of the PEL study, additional Pre-NOI traffic investigations and analysis and coordination with local officials for the State College Area Connector project were conducted. The analysis determined that the connector road and interior interchange connecting to PA 45 would provide some localized improvements to PA 45. However, it was determined that its inclusion was not necessary to address the overall project’s purpose and need, nor did it address corridor wide issues along PA 45. Therefore, any consideration of a new connection between PA 45 and US 322 would be better addressed as part of an independent PA 45 safety study. As a result, the proposed interior interchange and local road connection was removed from this State College Area Connector project and will be considered in the independent PA 45 Corridor Improvements project, as appropriate. As a result, the PEL alternatives (**Figure 5**) recommended to advance for NEPA study were refined and act as a starting point for detailed engineering alternative development in the EIS.

The following provides an overview of the revised PEL alternatives that were selected as both meeting the purpose and need and determined to be reasonable as a result of the PEL process. These alternatives will advance for further engineering and environmental study in the NEPA phase of the transportation project development process. These alternatives, along with the study area, are depicted in **Figure 5**. In addition, the No Build Alternative will be considered in the NEPA phase for baseline comparison.

Build Alternative - US 322-1S

The US 322-1S Build Alternative (US 322-1S) would have logical termini at the US 322 (Mt. Nittany Expressway) in Boalsburg and US 322 at Potters Mills Gap. US 322-1S would begin at the existing US 322 interchange with PA 45 near Boalsburg and follow existing US 322 to a point east of the Elks Club Road/Bear Meadows Road intersection. In this area, a two-lane service road would be provided on the north side of the limited access highway to provide connectivity to the local road network. US 322-1S would shift off existing US 322 to the north until it crosses south over US 322 near Neff Road in Tusseyville. The alternative would parallel US 322 to the south before connecting to the newly constructed US 322/PA 144 interchange at Potters Mills Gap. The Build Alternative US 322-1S would be 8.3 miles.

Build Alternative - US 322-1OEX

The US 322-1OEX Build Alternative (US 322-1OEX) is a hybrid of US 322-1S that attempts to maximize the use of the existing US 322 right-of-way. US 322-1OEX would have logical termini at

the US 322 (Mt. Nittany Expressway) in Boalsburg and US 322 at Potters Mills Gap. US 322-1OEX would begin at the existing US 322 interchange with PA 45 near Boalsburg and follow existing US 322 to a point east of the Elks Club Road/Bear Meadows Road intersection. In this area, a two-lane service road would be provided on the north side of the limited access highway to provide connectivity to the local road network. US 322-1OEX would shift off existing US 322 to the north until it crosses back to US 322 near Neff Road in Tusseyville. Near Neff Road, US 322-1OEX would follow existing US 322 to the newly constructed US 322/PA 144 interchange at Potters Mills Gap, with the inclusion of a two-lane service road to maintain local access for properties adjacent to the new limited access facility. US 322-1OEX would be 8.3 miles long.

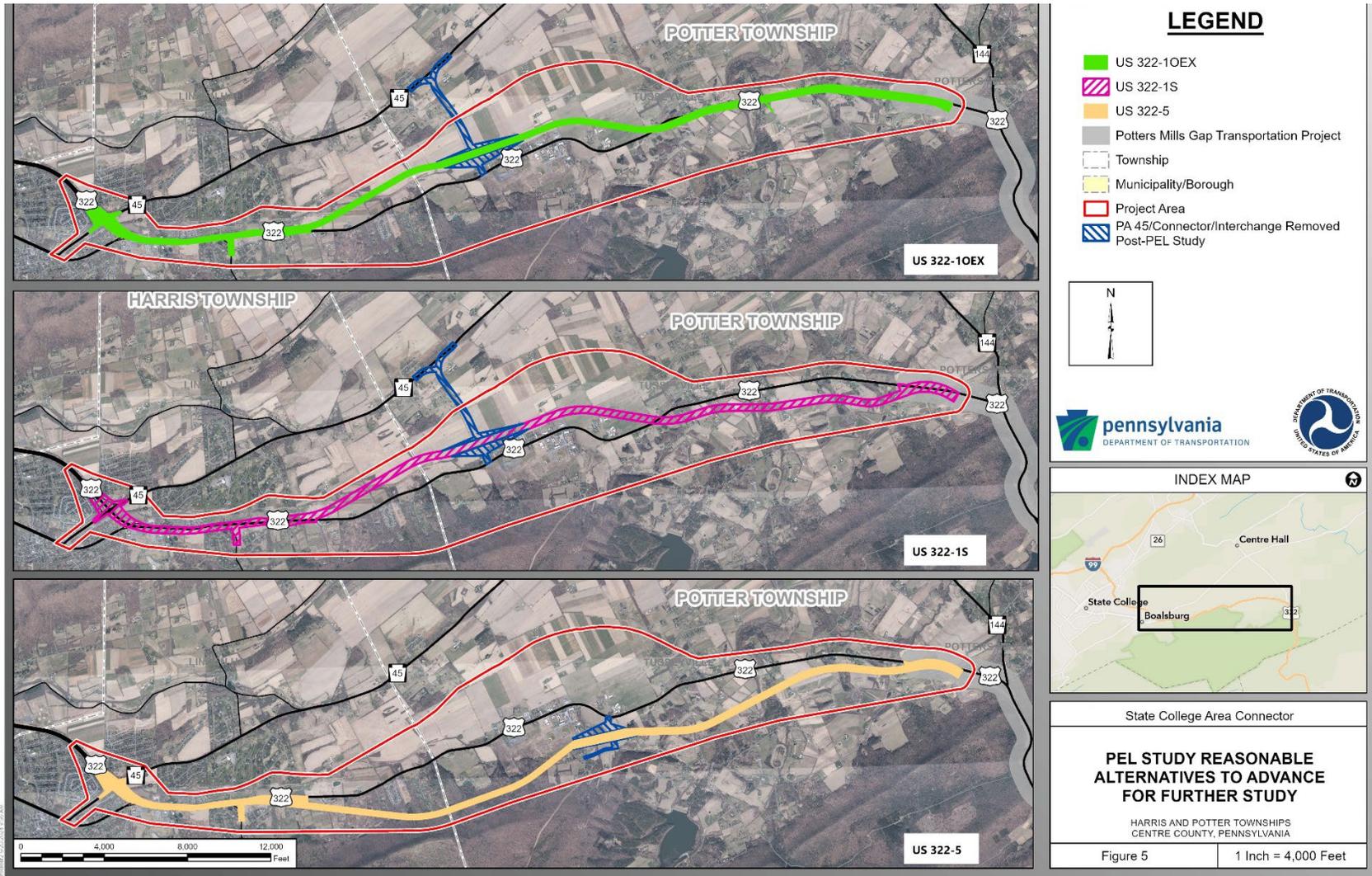
Build Alternative - US 322-5

The US 322-5 Build Alternative (US 322- 5) would have logical termini at the US 322 (Mt. Nittany Expressway) in Boalsburg and US 322 at Potters Mills Gap. US 322-5 would begin at the existing US 322 interchange with PA 45 near Boalsburg and follow existing US 322 to a point east of the Elks Club Road/Bear Meadows Road intersection. A two-lane service road on the north side of the limited access highway would connect to the local road network. US 322-5 would turn southeast off existing US 332 corridor near Tait Road, and proceed east along the lower slope of Tussey Mountain, paralleling US 322. The corridor would continue paralleling US 322 to the south crossing over Church Hill Road, Dogtown Road, and Red Mill Road and connect to the newly constructed US 322/PA 144 interchange at Potters Mills Gap. US 322-5 would be 8.4 miles long.

No Build Alternative

The No Build Alternative involves taking no action, except routine maintenance and other small projects currently listed in the Centre County Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The existing two-lane alignment of US 322 between Potters Mills Gap and Boalsburg, Pennsylvania would remain. No new alignments or roadway improvements would be constructed.

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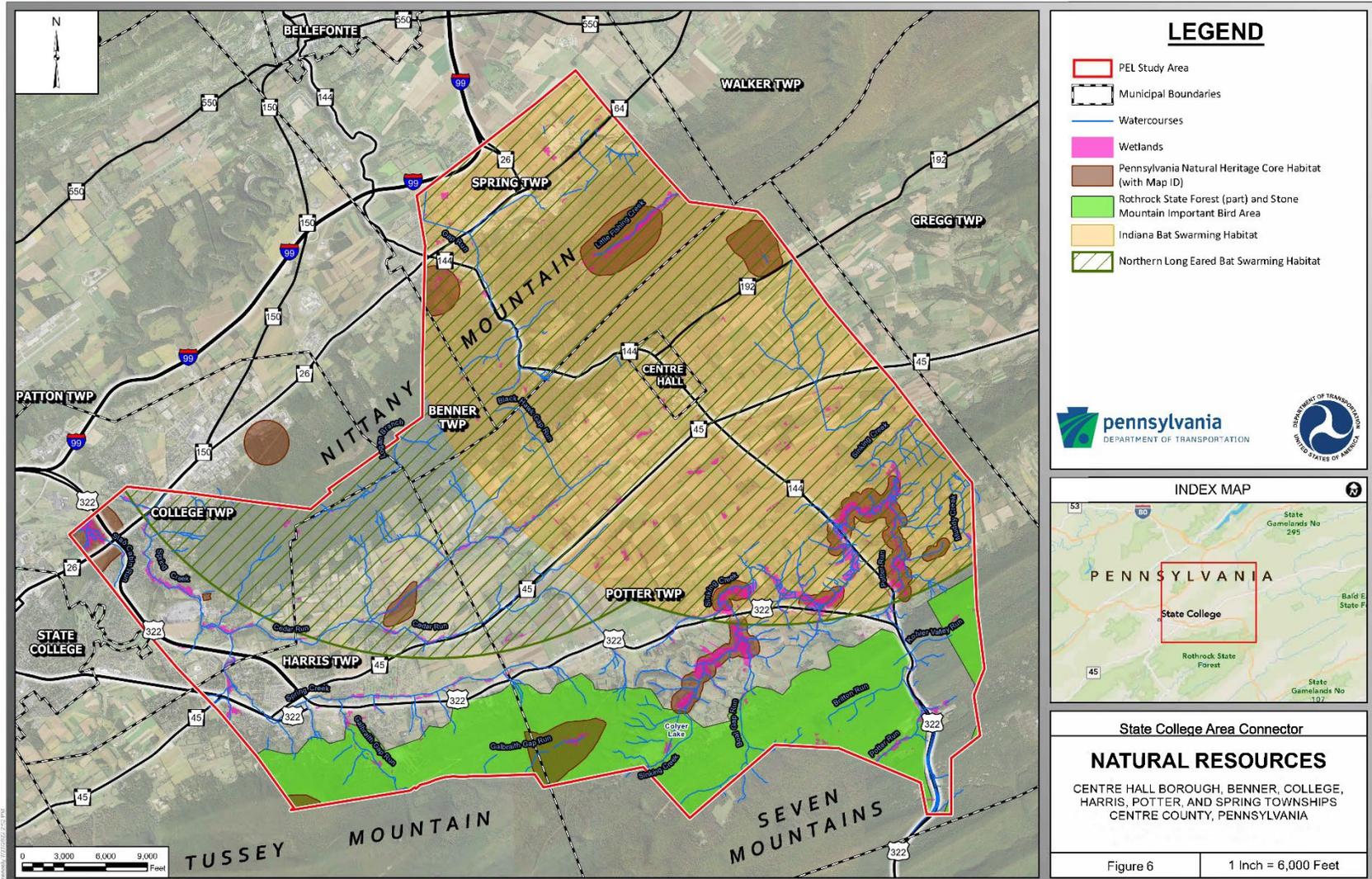
4. SUMMARY OF EXPECTED EFFECTS

During the PEL Study, environmental resources in the study area were identified by collecting publicly available web based existing maps and data; direct coordination with various federal, state, and local government agencies; select site reconnaissance; coordination with private organizations; and public input. These features were mapped using a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) database. **Figures 6, 7, and 8** identify environmental features used during the PEL Study to aid in the identification of reasonable alternatives to be carried forward for detailed study as part of the NEPA phase.

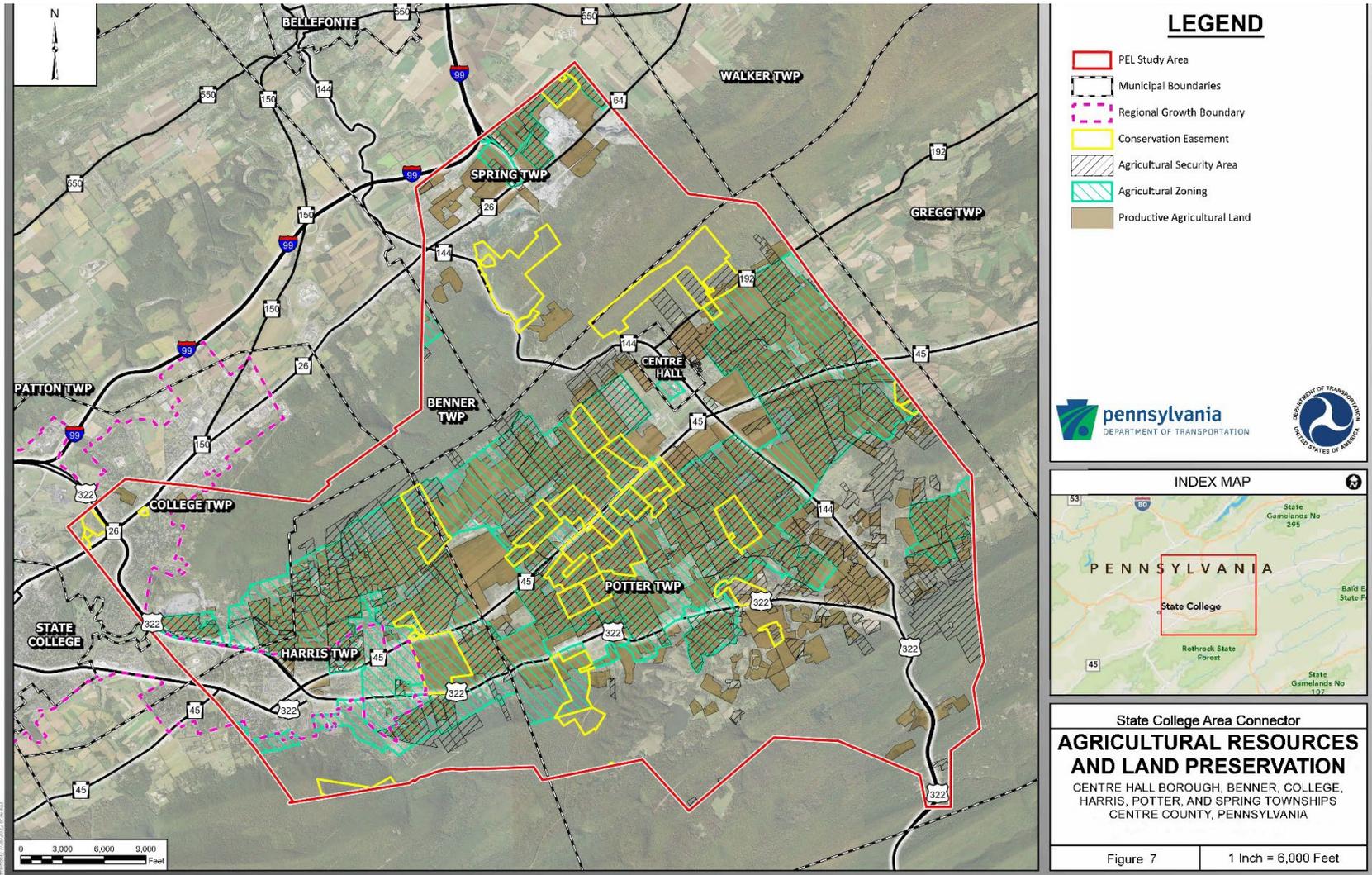
The following resources will be evaluated in the EIS and supporting technical studies:

- Cultural Resources
 - Archaeology
 - Historic Architecture
- Hazardous Materials
- Air Quality
- Noise-Sensitive Areas
- Natural Resources
 - Wildlife and Habitat
 - Threatened, Endangered, and Special Concern Species
 - Waters of the U.S.
 - Water Quality
 - Groundwater
 - Floodplains
- Farmlands
- Visual Resources
- Section 4(f)
 - Public Parks and Public Recreational Facilities
 - Historic Properties
 - State Game Lands
- Socioeconomics
 - Communities and Community Facilities
 - Population and Housing
 - Economic Resources
 - Land Use and Right-of-Way
 - Environmental Justice
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Climate Change
- Resiliency

Direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to these resources will be evaluated, as applicable. Effects are expected to these resources. This information is based on the analysis conducted during the PEL Study, which was publicly available and presented potential effects for the Build Alternative corridors (US 322-10EX, US 322-1S, and US 322-5) identified to be carried forward for detailed study as part of the NEPA phase of project development. **Table 3** presents preliminary effects that are based on these collective efforts. These effects will continue to be refined as the supporting documentation is reviewed by PennDOT, FHWA, the Cooperating and Participating Agencies for the study, and the Draft EIS effects could be further refined. The final NEPA effect will be documented in the Final EIS/ Record of Decision (ROD).



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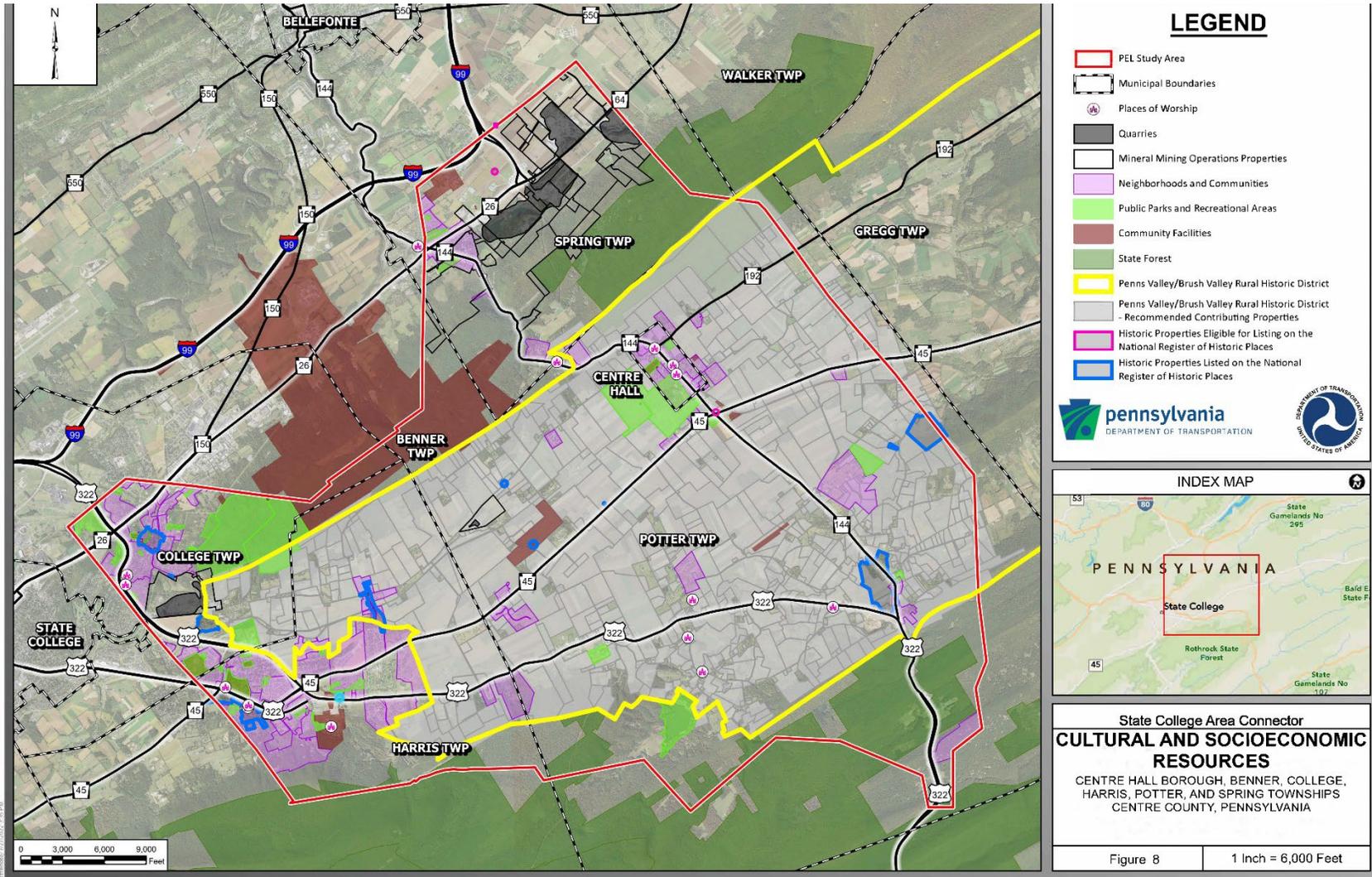


Table 3: Expected Preliminary Environmental Effects ¹

Regulatory Environmental Features		US 322 1 Existing (US 322 1 OEX)	US 322 1 South (US 322 1 S)	US 322 5
Natural Resources	Wetlands (acres)	4	3	8
	CWF-HQ/CWF Stream (linear feet)	5,129	6,681	9,046
	“Rothrock State Forest (part) & Stone Mountain” Important Bird Area (acres)	0	0	78
	PA Natural Heritage Core Habitat (acres)	25	11	15
	Bat Swarming Area (acres of forested land only)	15	7	7
	Productive Agricultural Land (acres)	251	278	181
	Conservation Easements (within Productive Agricultural Land, acres)	22	15	0
	Agricultural Security Areas (within Productive Agricultural Land, acres)	111	112	57
	Agricultural Zoning (within Productive Agricultural Land, acres)	152	160	97
Cultural Resources	National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) Listed/Eligible/Potentially Eligible Property (# involving historic structure displacements)	0	0	0
	Penns Valley/Brush Valley Rural Historic District Contributing Property (acres)	263	266	254
Socio-economic Resources	Public Parks (acres)	0	0	0.3
	Residential Displacements (# of resident units)	25	8	11
	Commercial Operations Displacements (# of operations) ²	6	3	2
	Places of Worship Displacements (# of primary structures used for worship)	1	1	1
	Community Facilities (acres of property only)	2	2	2
Engineering	Alternative Length (miles)	8.3	8.3	8.4
	Area of Potential Disturbance (acres)	463	446	432

¹ Anticipated effect numbers generated from secondary sources.

² Includes only commercial enterprises that are not agricultural nor quarry/mineral mining operations.

Note: No Build is not expected to have any environmental effects, nor would it address the purpose and need for the project.

In addition to the expected preliminary environmental effects identified in **Table 3**, a preliminary environmental justice investigation was conducted to assess any potential effect on environmental justice communities. Demographic data was collected from the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) EJ Screen tool and the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year Estimates for all census block groups within the PEL study area. The analysis identified one Census Tract (CT) block group within the project area (CT 118 Block Group 3 15.2%) with a higher concentration of minority populations when compared to the County (12.4%). Coordination with local officials and field investigations identified one community within this CT block group which is likely home to minority populations. This community is adjacent to existing US 322 and was specifically avoided during development of the PEL alternatives. None of the CT block groups had concentrations of populations below poverty level greater than the County (18.2%) or the state (12.0%). As the alternatives are further engineered and refined, avoidance and minimization of effects to this community will be advanced to avoid a disproportionate and adverse effect to environmental justice populations. Continued coordination with local officials will be conducted during the development of the EIS studies, and targeted public outreach will be conducted with this community.

5. ANTICIPATED PERMITS AND STUDY SCHEDULE

Permits and authorizations anticipated for the project include a joint United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Section 404/ Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) Chapter 105 permit for wetland and stream effects. Section 106 consultation with the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs), and other consulting parties will also be required, in addition to Section 4(f) concurrences from appropriate officials with jurisdiction. Moreover, Section 7 Endangered Species Act consultation with USFWS and the preparation of an Informal Biological Assessment is anticipated.

The schedule for permit and approval processes required by NEPA regulations are provided in **Table 4**. The timetable is based on assumptions of the level of effort for various tasks within the overall study, as well as preliminary coordination with the permitting agencies on the required permits and approvals. This schedule will be captured on the FHWA Permitting Dashboard website (<https://www.permits.performance.gov/>) and updated as the project develops.

Table 4: Milestone Permit Timetable

Milestone	Proposed Schedule
Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act Initiate Consultation Reconnaissance Survey Eligibility Report Determination of Effects Report Conclude Consultation	June 2023 (completed) July 2023 (completed) April 2024 December 2024 December 2024
Agency Scoping Meeting	June 2023 (completed)
Agency Milestone Permit Timetable Acknowledgement	April 2024 (completed)
Public Scoping Meeting	August 2024
Issuance of Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement	July 2024
Threatened and Endangered Species Coordination with USFWS	November 2023 – September 2025
Public Meeting on Detailed Alternatives	February 2025
Submit USACE Section 404 Permit Application	June 2025
USACE Permit Completeness Determination	15 days from receipt of application
USACE Permit Public Notice	15 days from application completed date
Draft EIS Notice of Availability	July 2025
Joint NEPA Draft EIS/Section 404 Public Hearing	August 2025
USACE Issues Provisional Permit	October/November 2025
Individual Section 4(f) authorization	April 2026
Final EIS/Record of Decision	July 2026
PA DEP Issues Section 401 Water Quality Certification (WQC)	August 2026
USACE Issues Initial Proffered Permit	30 days after completion of the 401 WQC (a)(2) process
USACE Issues Final Proffered Permit	Within 15 days of PennDOT agreeing to the terms and conditions of the Initial Proffered Permit
PA DEP Issues Chapter 105 Standard Permit	May 2028

6. SCOPING AND PUBLIC/AGENCY REVIEW

PennDOT conducted public and agency outreach activities during the PEL Study for the State College Area Connector to present information and collect input. The PEL Study had a Public and Agency Coordination Plan which provided the foundation for the outreach activities.

PennDOT has conducted agency coordination to inform the purpose and need and preliminary project alternatives, scoping meeting, and other elements outlined in this document. The Agency Coordination Plan (**Appendix B**) was reviewed and agreed to by the Pennsylvania resource

agencies including the Cooperating and Participating agencies. It is a living document that will be updated through the EIS process.

The resource agency meetings in Pennsylvania are referred to as Agency Coordination Meetings (ACM). Since PennDOT is the lead agency for this project, the agency meetings are typically held on the ACM's regularly scheduled meeting dates. **Table 5** provides an overview of the PEL meeting or field view dates and information presented as well as the pre-NEPA/EIS meeting dates.

Table 5: Agency Coordination Meeting Summary

Date	Topic Discussed
February 26, 2020	Introduce PEL Study
July 22, 2020	PEL Study Process Environmental Features Purpose and Need Coordination Plan Agency Participation
November 6, 2020	Study Update Coordination Plan Comments Consensus Process Concurrence Process PEL Process and Schedule
December 9, 2020	Study update Purpose and Need Cooperating and Participating Agency Status Draft Coordination Plan and Consensus Virtual Public Meeting Overview Environmental Features
May 26, 2021	Environmental Overview Range of Alternatives Alternative Screening Process Methodology
August 25, 2021	PEL Process Recap Environmental WebMap and Technical Memos Range of Alternatives Alternatives Screening Other Potential Future Project Concepts Public Engagement Next steps
December 8, 2021	September Public Meeting Summary Environmental Data Update Technical Memos Update Build Alternative Update Revised Agency Coordination Plan Schedule
March 23, 2022	September Public Meeting Overview Environmental Mapping Updates Traffic Updates Build Alternative Updates Next Steps

Date	Topic Discussed
May 25, 2022	April 2022 Public Meeting Summary Range of Alternatives and Alternative Screening Process Alternatives Review PEL Process Next Steps
July 19, 2022	Alternative Review Preliminary Recommendation for Alternatives to advance in NEPA Environmental concerns Potential Mitigation Concepts
August 1, 2022	Alternative Review Preliminary Recommendation for Alternatives to advance in NEPA Environmental concerns Potential Mitigation Concepts
August 24, 2022	Alternative Screening Process Environmental Resources Potential Effects and Comparative Analysis Traffic, Engineering and Planning Comparative Analysis Next Steps
February 22, 2023	October 2022 Public Meeting Summary Draft PEL Report Build Alternative option recommendations to advance in NEPA
June 28, 2023	Final PEL results EIS Scoping Environmental Methodologies
January 24, 2024	EIS Purpose and Need Draft Agency Coordination Plan

Additionally, PennDOT conducted four public open house meetings. These meetings solicited public comment on the presented information which included:

- Virtual Open House Meeting – October 2020
 - overview of the transportation development process
 - PEL Study process
 - environmental resources
 - engineering and traffic data
 - purpose and study need
- Open House Public Meeting – September 21 and 22, 2021
 - PEL Study process
 - range of alternative concepts
 - Upgrade Existing and Build Alternative corridor concepts
 - alternative screening process
 - preliminary environmental and traffic analysis
- Open House Public Meeting – April 5 and 6, 2022
 - environmental data collection efforts
 - traffic analyses
 - Upgrade Existing and Build Alternative corridor refinements

- key resource and alternative modifications since September 2021 meetings
- Open House Public Meeting – October 19 and 20, 2022
 - PEL Study Report draft recommendations for alternatives to move forward
 - potential environmental and traffic benefits/burdens

In addition, public official kick-off meetings were held in August, September, and November 2020 (Harris Township/August 10, Centre Hall Borough/August 13, Potter Township/August 17, College Township/August 20, Benner Township/September 3, Spring Township/September 8, Centre County/November 24, 2020). These meetings introduced the data presented in the Virtual Open House Meeting.

Combined public official meetings were also held:

- August 31, 2021, in advance of the September 2021 open house meeting
- March 30, 2022, in advance of the of the April 2022 open house meeting
- September 7, 2022, in advance of the October 2022 open house meetings

Each of these meetings presented the boards and documents used at the corresponding public open house meeting.

FHWA and PennDOT are continuing the scoping process and formally beginning the EIS development process with the publication of the NOI. In preparation for the issuance of the NOI, PennDOT has made updates to the project website (penndot.pa.gov/SCAC) to direct the public to the Final State College Area Connector Planning and Environmental Linkages Report and associated scoping documents. Additionally, PennDOT will continue to conduct targeted outreach to communities in and around the study area.

Outreach will include traditional public meetings and hearings, public official coordination, and stakeholder outreach/interviews as appropriate. Notification to these events will include newspaper advertising, social media posts, email invitations, mail carrier delivered notifications (e.g., Every Door Direct Service or letter invitation), and community flyer postings, as appropriate.

Public outreach that focuses on the environmental justice and underserved populations (e.g., Plain Sect Community/Amish) will be conducted by posting flyers in locations that are frequented by these communities and using Every Door Direct mailing for the zip codes within the project area. To reach the Plain Sect/Amish community, letter invitations with flyers will be sent to the three church district bishops that include and are adjacent to the project area.

A 30-day public comment period is being held in association with the publication of the NOI in the Federal Register. There will be at least three more public involvement opportunities for the State College Area Connector Project. During project Scoping, there will be two public open house meetings. The first Scoping public open house meeting will occur after the NOI is issued and will present detailed traffic analysis, updated environmental features, and preliminary engineering alignment alternatives. The second Scoping public open house meeting will be held following alternative refinement and identification of a draft recommended preferred alternative. This public

open house meeting will also present potential environmental effects and conceptual mitigation. Lastly, following the issuance of the Notice of Availability of the Draft EIS, a public hearing with an option for multiple nights, if necessary, will be held. Refer to the Coordination Plan for Public Involvement for more information (**Appendix C**).

The following public involvement materials are available on the study website (www.PennDOT.pa.gov/SCAC) to support the NOI:

- *State College Area Connector Planning and Environmental Linkages Report*
- *Virtual Public Meeting Summary Report for the State College Area Connector Planning and Environmental Linkage Report*
- *Open House Public Meeting Summary Report for the State College Area Connector Planning and Environmental Linkages Report - September 2021*
- *Open House Public Meeting Summary Report for the State College Area Connector Planning and Environmental Linkages Report – April 2022*
- *October 2022 Open House Public Meeting Summary Report for the State College Area Connector Planning and Environmental Linkages Report*

7. REQUEST FOR IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVES, INFORMATION, AND ANALYSES

Through the publication of the NOI, FHWA is soliciting comments from agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the public regarding potential alternatives, information on resources to analyze, analysis methods, and potential environmental effects from the Proposed Action for inclusion in the EIS. Interested parties are invited to submit comments by any of the following methods: Website: For access to the documents, go to the Federal eRulemaking Portal located at <http://www.regulations.gov> or the project website located at penndot.pa.gov/SCAC.

Follow the online instructions for submitting comments.

Mailing address or for hand delivery or courier: Federal Highway Administration, 30 North Third Street, Suite 700, Harrisburg PA, 17101

Email address: Julia.Moore@dot.gov

All submissions should include the agency name and the docket number that appears in the heading of this Notice. All comments received will be posted without change to <http://www.regulations.gov>, including any personal information provided. A summary of the comments received will be included in the Draft EIS.

8. CONTACT INFORMATION

FHWA: Julia Moore, Senior Environmental Specialist, Federal Highway Administration, Pennsylvania Division, 30 North Third Street, Suite 700, Harrisburg PA, 17101; email Julia.Moore@dot.gov; 717-221-4585.

Pennsylvania Department of Transportation: Eric Murnyack, PE, Project Manager, 70 PennDOT Drive, Clearfield, PA, 16830; email emurnyack@pa.gov; 814-765-0435.

APPENDIX A – PURPOSE AND NEED REPORT

Purpose and Need Statement for the state college area **CONNECTOR**

July 2024

Project Identification #: 112784



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List of Acronyms

AADT	Annual Average Daily Traffic
ADTT	Average Daily Truck Traffic
ASA	Agricultural Security Area
BLOS	Bicycle Level of Service
CATA	Centre Area Transportation Authority
CCMPO	Centre County Metropolitan Planning Organization
CCPCDO	Centre County Planning and Community Development Office
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CRPA	Centre Regional Planning Agency
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
HCM	Highway Capacity Manual
HSM	Highway Safety Manual
I-	Interstate
LAB	League of American Bicyclists
LOS	Level of Service
L RTP	Long Range Transportation Plan
mph	Miles per Hour
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHS	National Highway System
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
PA	Pennsylvania Route

PCIT	Pennsylvania Crash Information Tool
PEL	Planning and Environmental Linkages
PennDOT	Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
PSI	Potential for Safety Improvement
SCCCTS	South Central Centre County Transportation Study
TDM	Travel Demand Model
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program
US	U.S. Route
VPD	Vehicles per Day

Executive Summary

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and in coordination with the Centre County Metropolitan Planning Organization (CCMPO), is furthering transportation studies that were developed during the *State College Area Connector Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study* (PennDOT³, 2023). The final PEL Report was published in June 2023 and FHWA acknowledged in a letter dated September 14, 2023 that the PEL Study was consistent with 23 USC Section 168 and 23 CFR 450.212.

This report documents the transportation problems within the State College Area Connector project area (**Figure 1**) in the development of the purpose and need statements, while considering the vision and aspirations of the study area communities.

Project Area Needs

- High peak hour traffic volumes cause congestion and result in unacceptable Levels of Service (LOS) (LOS D [rural only], E, or F) on US 322 roadway and intersections.
- Existing roadway configurations and traffic conditions contribute to safety concerns in the project area.
- The roadway network and configuration in the project area lacks continuity and does not meet driver expectations.

Project Purpose

The purpose of this project is to improve roadway congestion by achieving acceptable LOS and to address safety issues by reducing the predicted crash frequency along the US 322 corridor between Potters Mills and Boalsburg. Additionally, the project will aim to provide a transportation network that meets driver expectations.

Logical Termini and Independent Utility

For the State College Area Connector project, the logical termini in the western portion of the project area is US 322 (Mt. Nittany Expressway) and in the eastern portion of the project area it is US 322 (Potters Mills Gap). Each of these termini are a four-lane limited access highway that provide high capacity, efficient distribution of traffic, and future capacity for additional traffic.

Conclusion

This Purpose and Needs Statement for the State College Area Connector Project documents transportation problems within the project area and provides the foundation for the refinement, development, and evaluation of the alternatives advanced for further evaluation from the PEL Study.

1.0 Introduction

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and in coordination with the Centre County Metropolitan Planning Organization (CCMPO), is advancing the transportation studies that were developed during the State College Area Connector Project Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study which was finalized in June 2023.

This report evaluates the identified PEL Study transportation purpose and need statements and associated data to confirm and/or refine, as necessary, or identify new issues, for the purpose and need for the State College Area Connector National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) investigations. The purpose and need statements have been developed in accordance with Title 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 771 as well as the PennDOT Needs Study Handbook (PUB-319, May 2020) and PennDOT Design Manual 1, Transportation Program Development and Project Delivery Process (PUB-10, May 2020).

1.1 PEL Study Overview

The State College Area Connector PEL Study identified transportation needs within southern Centre County, Pennsylvania in a 70 square mile initial study area. The study evaluated a range of alternatives to determine how the alternatives addressed the Study's purpose and need, balanced impacts on the natural and built environment, addressed traffic concerns within the overall study area, met engineering considerations such as constructability, cost, and considered area planning goals. The PEL Study screened nine Build Alternative corridors to determine the best options to advance for NEPA evaluation and preliminary engineering. Based on the impact analysis, three corridors were identified (US 322-1S, US 322-1OEX and US 322-5) to be advanced as reasonable alternatives, and a specific project area was developed to initiate detailed field investigations and conduct preliminary engineering investigations to address the transportation purpose and needs as part of the NEPA process (**Figure 1**).

The final PEL Report was published in June 2023 and FHWA acknowledged in a letter, dated September 14, 2023, that the PEL Study was consistent with 23 USC Section 168 and 23 CFR 450.212. As a result, the PEL findings provide a starting point for the NEPA studies and preliminary engineering efforts. Additionally, FHWA concurred that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was the proper NEPA classification for the State College Area Connector project.

The PEL Study also identified other transportation projects which did not meet the full purpose and need identified in the PEL, but could provide transportation benefits to the study area roadways independently. One such project was a safety study along PA 45 generally from Boal Avenue to PA 144. Subsequent to the PEL completion, additional traffic investigations and analysis and coordination with local officials for the State College Area Connector project determined that the connector road and interior interchange would provide some localized improvements to PA 45. However, it was determined that the connector

road and associated interchange was not necessary to address the project's purpose and need, nor did it address corridor wide issues along PA 45. As a result, the proposed interior interchange and local road connection was removed from this State College Area Connector project and will be considered in the independent PA 45 Corridor Improvements project, as appropriate. The State College Area Connector project will advance independently but will not preclude the inclusion of a future interior interchange and local road connection should the independent safety study along PA 45 determine that it would be beneficial in connection with other proposed PA 45 Corridor Improvements project. **Figure 2** provides the revised project area for the State College Area Connector project that will move forward for alternative development and investigation.

1.2 Project Area Description

The State College Area Connector project would address the transportation purpose and needs of the project area while considering the vision and goals of the project area communities. Understanding the communities' visions aid in determining if or how community-related features should be incorporated into the transportation project.

The project area is approximately 3,963 acres, extends through the southern portion of Centre County, and traverses Potter and Harris Townships (**Figure 2**). The project area is centered on US 322 which provides local access through the project area and to regional destinations and beyond. US 322, Mount Nittany Expressway at the western end of the project area provides direct access to Interstate 99 (I-99) which, in turn, provides access to nearby I-80. US 322 at Potters Mills provides access south to the Harrisburg area and connects to I-81 and I-83.

1.3 Previous Transportation Studies and Improvements

Many transportation improvement studies and projects have occurred that have influenced travel within and adjacent to the State College Area Connector project area. Along the US 322 corridor, studies for transportation improvements have been undertaken at various times since the 1970s. The *Purpose and Need for the State College Area Connector Planning and Environmental Linkage (PEL) Study* (PennDOT, 2021) report documents these investigations in detail. **Table 1** provides a summary of the transportation studies and improvements which have influenced travel along US 322.



LEGEND

- Project Area
- Municipal Boundaries



January 2024

State College Area Connector

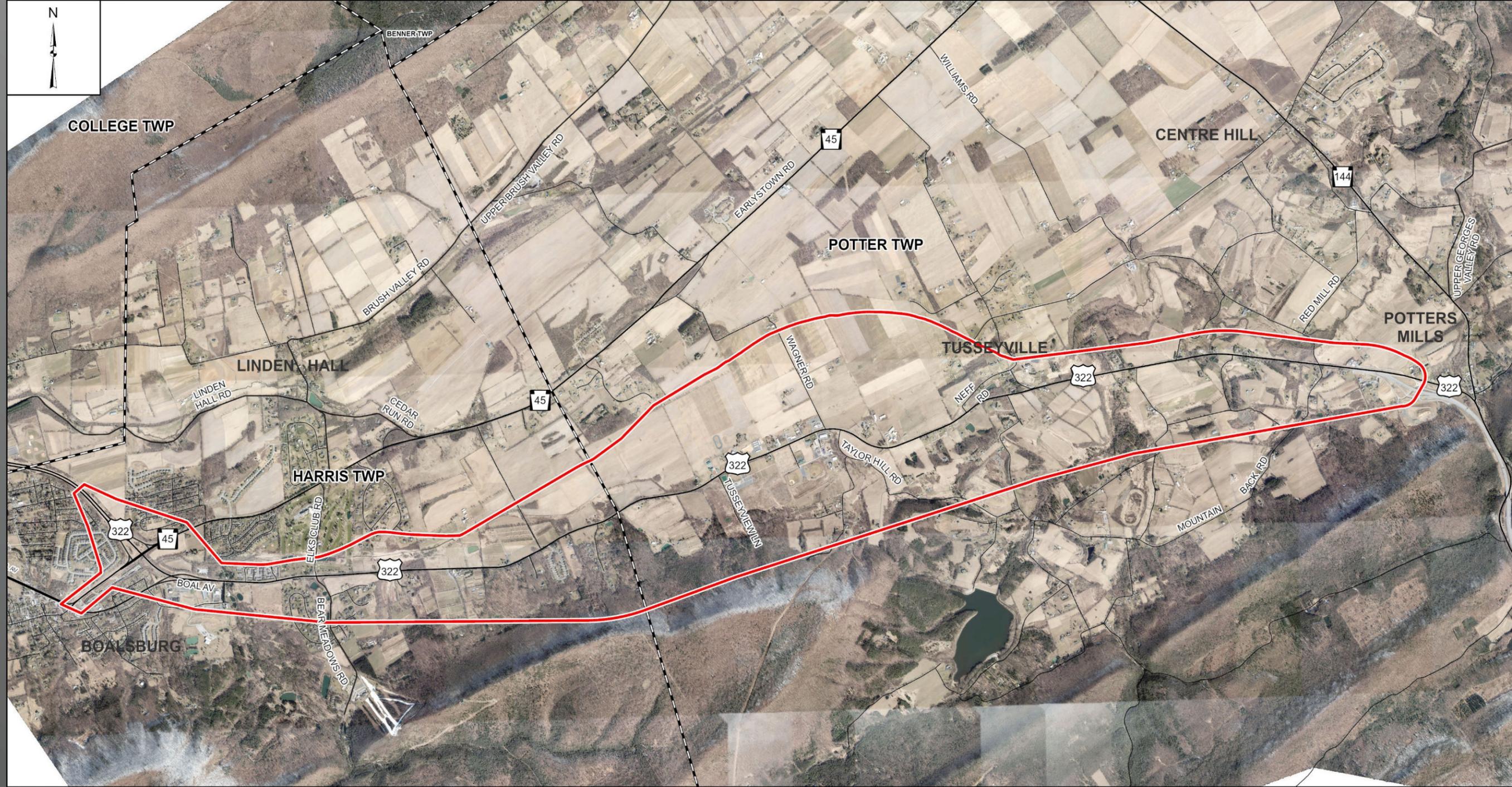
PROJECT AREA

CENTRE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

Figure 1

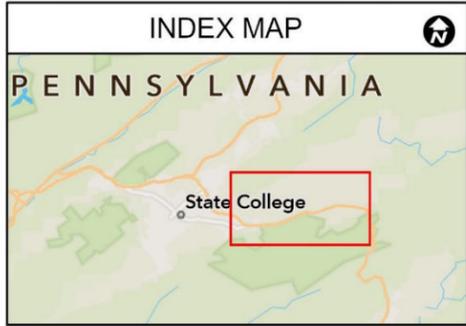
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LEGEND

- Project Area
- Municipal Boundaries



July 2024

State College Area Connector

REVISED PROJECT AREA

CENTRE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

Figure 2

1 Inch = 3,000 Feet

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Service Layer Credits: Community: Centre County Government, data.pa.gov, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, FAO, MET/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USFWS, PennDOT/PennDOT_State_College_2023_Ortho; Pennsylvania Crash Information Tool (PCIT)

Table 1 – Past Studies and Improvements

Project	Activity	Timeframe
PA 144 is posted with weight restrictions on Nittany Mountain	Construction	Late 1980s
I 99 Construction (Blair County to I 80)	Construction	1990s
South Central Centre County Transportation Study (SCCTS). The study was stopped in 2004 due to a statewide transportation funding shortfall.	Study	1998
Intersection improvements at US 322 and PA 144 intersection and left turn lanes at the US 322 and Mountain Back Road intersection	Construction	2006
Added turn lane and intersection improvements at US 322 and Bear Meadows Road intersection	Construction	2007
Added vehicle spacing pavement marking “dots” and signage along US 322: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elks Club Road to Sharer Road Harley Davidson to Wagner Road Dogtown Road to Tusseyville Road (closed) 	Construction	Summer 2009
Added Centerline and Edgeline Rumble Strips along US 322 (Elks Club Road to Potters Mills)	Construction	Summer 2010
Removed passing zones at select sections of US 322 east of Elks Club Road and west of Dogtown Road	Construction	Summer 2011
Added intersection warning pavement markings at US 322 and Cider Press Road intersection	Construction	Summer 2011
Added center turn lane along US 322 (Harley Davidson to Wagner Road)	Construction	Fall 2014
Adjusted S curve alignment and profile along US 322 (vicinity of Wagner Road and Taylor Hill Road intersections)	Construction	Fall 2014
Constructed new bridge over US 322 in area of Sand Mountain Road	Construction	September 2015
“Potters Mills Gap” a new four lane roadway section along US 322 from the Sand Mountain Road intersection, ending west at a new interchange at the PA 144/US 322 intersection	Construction	July 2021
Data Refresh of SCCTS traffic	Study	2019
State College Area Connector Planning and Environmental Linkages Study	Study	2023

1.4 Regional Planning Context

A review of county and regional planning documents and initiatives was conducted to understand the transportation and land use visions and goals in the project area communities for consideration in the development of the purpose and need. In particular, a review of the following plans and maps was conducted:

- Centre County MPO LRTP 2044 (adopted in 2015 and updated in 2018)
- Centre County MPO LRTP 2050 (adopted on September 22, 2020)
- Centre County MPO FY 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (adopted June 6, 2022)
- Centre County MPO Comprehensive Plan Phase I (2003)

- Centre Region Council of Government -Centre Region Comprehensive Plan (November 2013) – includes State College Borough and College, Ferguson, Halfmoon, Harris, and Patton Townships
- Centre Region Council of Government - Centre Regional Bike Plan (December 2015 amended 2022)
- Penn Valley Region Comprehensive Plan (adopted January 2006) – includes Centre Hall and Millheim Boroughs and Gregg, Haines, Miles, Penn, and Potter Townships
- Harris Township Comprehensive Rural Rezoning Report (March 2019)
- Harris Township Boalsburg Small Area Plan (June 13, 2016)
- Harris Township Zoning Map (March 14, 2016)
- Harris Township Rural Rezoning Report (March 2019)
- Harris Township Zoning Map (March 14, 2016)
- Potter Township Zoning Map (April 17, 2019)

PennDOT recognizes its role as a partner with counties and local communities to ensure that transportation improvement projects are developed through a collaborative planning process that links transportation projects with regional and community land use decisions. More detailed information on the county and regional plans and local goals and vision affecting transportation planning is provided in Appendix B of the *Final Purpose and Need for the State College Area Connector Planning and Environmental Linkage (PEL) Study (PennDOT, 2021)*.

The State College Area Connector project is included on the CCMPO's Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program. The LRTP is a 20-year planning document that provides a vision for transportation improvements and strategies for the region. CCMPO's *Long Range Transportation Plan 2050* was adopted on September 22, 2020. Once a project is planned in the LRTP, it can then advance for inclusion on the TIP which identifies specific funding sources for a four-year period. The CCMPO's FY2023-2026 Centre County TIP (adopted June 28, 2022) includes \$15 million in discretionary (spike) funds for the preliminary and final engineering activities. The commitment of funding for the engineering phases enables the NEPA environmental investigations and engineering work to be completed, which is anticipated to result in a decision on what proposed transportation solution should be advanced for future investment of federal and state funds.

1.4.1 Plan Summary

The following provides a summary of the key plan findings that are pertinent to the State College Area Connector Project area.

- **Centre County LRTP 2050** – I-80 impacts traffic patterns on connecting roadways within Central Pennsylvania. It influences an increase in truck traffic and the safety and quality of life in Centre County communities traversed by these connecting roadways. The LRTP 2050 identifies the concerns in the project area to include vehicular congestion on a daily basis during peak hours of

travel due to high volumes of interstate truck traffic, commuters, and special-event traffic; traveler delays from frequent incidents; and traffic conflicts that result in crashes and safety issues. As Centre County continues to grow as the economic hub for surrounding areas in central Pennsylvania, vehicular traffic is projected to increase to volumes that result in poor levels of service, which will exacerbate the needs associated with congestion, safety, and incidents.

- **Penns Valley Regional Comprehensive Plan (adopted in January 30, 2006)**
 - Devise strategy to enable a new road to convey vehicles into and through the region quickly and efficiently with strictly controlled points of local access and “to proactively accommodate their fair share of growth and development in a compact and dispersed configuration that reflects the Region’s past development patterns rather than the consumptive sprawling patterns of contemporary society.”
 - Potential major development pressures likely to result from the eventual improvement of the US 322 corridor. Access provided by a new highway “could change the past economic conditions and introduce unwanted growth that is inconsistent with the Region’s paramount goal to protect its rural way-of-life.”
 - Identify this corridor as the route for the new major highway to connect the existing four-lane US 322 highway to the east with the Mount Nittany Expressway
 - Notes that “local officials would strongly object to the construction of an interchange within the Region as it could produce an inducement to large-scale development that would conflict with the Region’s overall community development objectives.”
 - Commuter bus service – plan promotes working with the CCMPO and Centre Area Transportation Authority (CATA) to study the feasibility of expanding commuter bus service to the Penns Valley Region

- **Centre Region Comprehensive Plan (dated November 2013)**
 - Promote the expansion of the region’s pedestrian and bicycle system and transit services, including within the project area.
 - Uses a Regional Growth Boundary and Sewer Service Area as a tool to influence where growth occurs in the Region.

- **Centre Region Bike Plan (adopted December 15, 2015; amended March 28, 2022)**
 - Identifies critical gaps in the Centre Region Bicycle Network.
 - Recommends a Bike Corridor in Harris Township (referred to as Corridor Hh) extending along PA 45 from the Mount Nittany Expressway to Rosslyn Road.

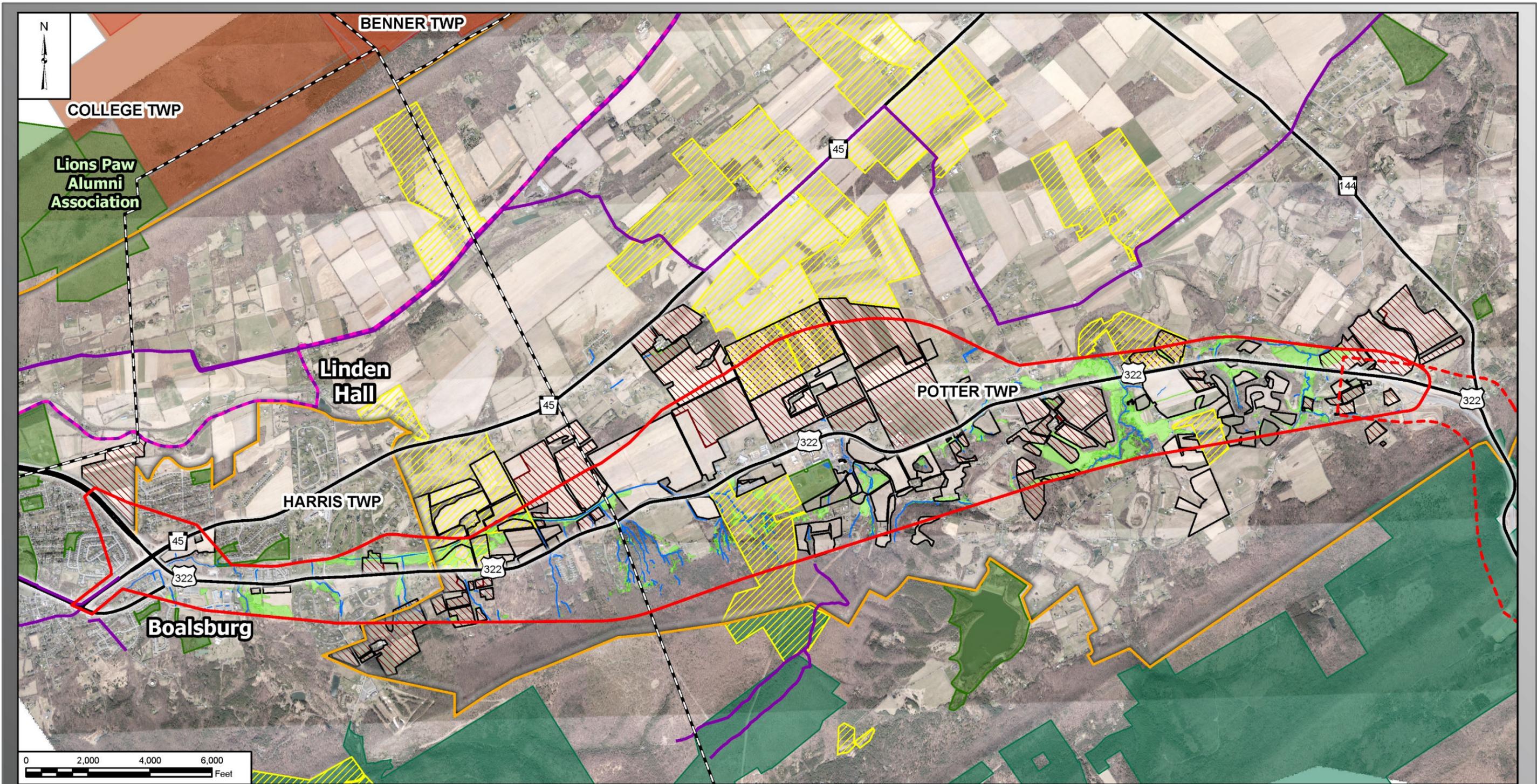
- **Harris Township Comprehensive Rural Rezoning Report (March 2019)**
 - Proposed rural zoning districts and ordinance amendments drafted by the Harris Township Planning Commission for the areas of the Township outside the Regional Growth Boundary and Sewer Service Area based on the identified long-range planning goals for the rural properties that build upon the 2013 Centre Region Comprehensive Plan.
- **Boalsburg Small Area Plan (June 13, 2016)**
 - Establishes a long-range vision to guide the future growth and development of the Boalsburg area in the western portion of the project area.
 - Proposes the transformation of the Boal Avenue (US 322 Business) corridor into a “welcoming and attractive gateway” and providing transportation facilities that balance the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists through streetscape improvements. This includes a recommendation to have the road considered for a “road diet” to reduce the number of travel lanes and provide a center turning lane and bike lanes all within the current cartway.

2.0 Project Area Conditions

2.1 Environmental Setting

Transportation infrastructure can influence community growth and facilitate land use changes. While existing or planned transportation facilities are rarely the sole factor for development and land use changes, transportation projects can affect development and land use changes through the access they provide or limit. Given this, it is important to identify the environmental setting of the project area early and consider how the existing land uses, along with regional and local planning goals and visions, may affect the need for transportation improvements.

The project area is approximately 3,963 acres, extends through the southern portion of Centre County, and traverses Potter and Harris Townships (**Figure 3**). The project area lies within the southwestern portion of the Penns Valley at the base of the Tussey Mountain range. The topography is characterized by a well-defined steep mountain to the south and extending across gently sloping valleys to the east and west. The eastern portion of the project area is drained by Sinking Creek and the western portion is drained by Spring Creek. Each watershed is characterized by high-quality waters, including supporting wild trout and exceptional value wetlands. There are numerous headwater streams and springs along the foothills of Tussey Mountain that contribute flow to the mainstem of Spring Creek. Exceptional value wetlands extend across both watersheds including both forested and non-forested floodplain positions. Initial screening for threatened and endangered species identified potential concerns with protected bats and bald eagles.



LEGEND

- | | | | |
|---|------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| Project Area | PA Bike Route G | Agricultural Security Area | Delineated Wetland |
| Potters Mills Gap Transportation Project | Bike Trail | Rockview State Correctional Institute | Parks and Public Recreation Area |
| Municipal Boundaries | Productive Agriculture | State Correctional Institution, Rockview Historic District | State Forest |
| Penns Valley & Brush Valley Rural Historic District | Easement | Delineated Stream | |



July 2024

State College Area Connector

RESOURCE OVERVIEW

CENTRE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

Figure 3	1 Inch = 3,000 Feet
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Service Layer Credits: PennDOT\PennDOT_State_College_2024_Orthro... Community: Centre County Government, data.pa.gov, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, FAO, MET/ANASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USFWS; Pennsylvania Crash Information Tool (PCIT)

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Environmental features in the project area have been mapped using a comprehensive Geographic Information Systems (GIS) database (**Figure 3**). The project area is primarily rural with many productive farming operations interspersed with small villages such as Potters Mills, Tusseyville, and Pleasant Gap, which are typically positioned along well-established travel ways. Productive farmland comprises nearly 34% of the land use in the project area, with 31% of the farmland within Agricultural Security Areas (ASAs) and 9% preserved in Agricultural Conservation Easements (ACEs). Given the large expanse of farmland and number of active farm operations, the roadways within the project area are often used by farmers to access various land parcels and generate slower-moving farm equipment traffic that mixes with faster-moving cars and trucks.

More modern developments, in particular residential subdivisions, are located in the western portion of the project area and adjacent to or near US 322. Commercial and industrial development is also found along the US 322 corridor. Developed areas comprise 19% of the project area with 11% in residential use and 3% commercial and industrial use. The remaining 2% of the project area includes land uses such as a golf course, large ponds/lakes, transportation facilities, etc.

A majority of the project area is encompassed by the Penns/Brush Valley Rural Historic District (Historic District) that was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in March 2002. The Historic District is eligible for its agricultural patterns and associated landscape features which were established during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and its farm and village architecture found within the district. The project area includes numerous structures that were identified as contributing elements to the historic district. There are also several historic properties that have individually been identified as listed or eligible for listing on the NRHP.

2.2 Existing Transportation Network and Services

2.2.1 Transportation Network and Conditions

Pennsylvania is in a strategic position with interstate roadways traversing the state and serving national and international trade routes, and Centre County is centrally located within the Commonwealth with access to I-80 and I-99. This geographic position makes the County's network of roads important for interstate, statewide, and regional traffic and commerce in addition to accommodating local trips.

The US 322 corridor extends through the center of the project area. It is on the National Highway System (NHS). Through the project area, US 322 is generally a two-lane roadway which connects to four-lane divided roadway sections at the eastern and western ends of the project area. US 322 carries both local and regional traffic and a mix of all vehicle types (automobiles, medium trucks, and heavy trucks). It is classified as a principal arterial, indicating that the intended purpose of the facility is to convey traffic throughout the region (i.e., the purpose of the facility is not solely for local trips, but to carry through and

regional traffic). Due to substantial roadside land development and the sparse local street network, US 322 also operates as a collector route. On a local level, US 322 serves as a key connection to the State College area, providing access to the County’s economic hub and to Penn State University’s main campus. On an intrastate level, the US 322 corridor serves as the prime connection between many cities to the east and west of Centre County via its connection to I-80. US 322 is also identified by the CCMPO as a key trucking corridor which is a two-lane roadway that does not meet modern design standards desirable to accommodate the high truck volumes present on these types of roadways (CCMPO, 2022). The County’s primary concerns related to freight movements in these types of corridors involve safety and the impact on road and bridge conditions.

There are also several local roadways within the project area which convey traffic to the arterial roadway network and beyond.

2.2.2 Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

Within the Centre Region, there has been progress toward developing a comprehensive and interconnected bicycle network. The Centre Region Council of Governments prepared the Centre Region Bike Plan (adopted December 15, 2015; amended March 28, 2022). The Bike Plan identifies future linkages and programs to further expand the existing network. The Bike Plan is also expected to enhance the Region’s application to the League of American Bicyclists (LAB) to maintain its Bicycle Friendly Community designation and raise the current designation from Bronze Level to Silver and ultimately Gold designation. Within the project area, the Bike Plan specifically identifies a recommended bicycle corridor in Harris Township, referred to as Corridor Hh. It would extend along PA 45 from Boal Avenue to the Mount Nittany Expressway. Harris Township also has a proposed bicycle facility along Spring Creek from Boalsburg to Elks Club Road and another one connecting Kaywood Park to the residential development of Aspen Heights. There are no identified bicycle facilities within the Potter Township portion of the project area.

Table 3 – Bicycle Level of Service Descriptions

LOS	General BLOS Description
A	These roadways are generally safe and attractive to all bicyclists.
B	These roadways are adequate for all bicyclists.
C	These roadways are adequate for bicyclists with some degree of experience.
D	Bicyclists can anticipate an interaction with motor vehicles and should be experienced riders.
E	Bicyclists can anticipate a high level of interaction with motor vehicles and should be experienced riders.
F	These roadways do not provide any bicycle facility and would be difficult to navigate safely.

A Bicycle Level of Service (BLOS) analysis was also conducted for the project area for both the Existing (Base Year 2023) and No Build (Design Year 2050) scenarios. BLOS is a measure that is used to predict a bicyclist’s perception of a specific roadway environment based on its ability to accommodate motor vehicles and bicycle traffic, the roadway’s geometric design, and traffic conditions. Similar to the LOS

ratings used to evaluate motorized vehicle traffic, the BLOS ratings include A, B, C, D, E, and F that are intended to reflect users' perception of the road segment's LOS for bicycle travel. **Table 3** provides an overview of the BLOS criteria and what they generally mean for a cyclist.

BLOS A and B are considered comfortable for most users and BLOS C is comfortable for most adult users. Roadways with BLOS D, E, and F should be used only by more experienced riders or not used by bicyclists at all. The BLOS findings for the project area indicated that US 322 currently operates at BLOS D or worse and is anticipated to deteriorate in the Design Year (2050). US 322 does not operate at acceptable BLOS due to narrow lane widths and shoulders, high truck volumes, high travel speeds, and pavement conditions which are undesirable for cyclists.

From a pedestrian perspective, the project area is characterized as generally rural and pedestrian facilities are limited. However, Centre County municipal planning departments, the Centre Regional Planning Agency (CRPA), and the Centre County Planning and Community Development Office (CCPCDO) routinely require or encourage developers to include pedestrian amenities as part of proposed land development site plans and subdivisions in locations where the facilities are appropriate. These entities view individual facilities as integral to the development of an overall interconnected pedestrian system. The CCMPO staff is actively involved in land development plan reviews at county, regional, and municipal levels and works with PennDOT to include pedestrian facilities in transportation improvement projects, as appropriate.

2.2.3 Transit and Park-and-Ride Lots

The Centre Area Transportation Authority (CATA) is a joint municipal authority, comprised of State College Borough and College, Ferguson, Harris, and Patton Townships. Currently, there are no CATABUS fixed routes within the project area. The only transit provided within the project area is CATA's CATAGO microtransit in the Boalsburg area (CATA, 2024).

There are no official park and ride facilities within the project area. A countywide park-and-ride study is proposed as part of the CCMPO's LRTP 2050 to develop a strategy to ensure the County's transportation system has an adequate mix of travel modes. This proposed study would account for changing commute patterns in the area, provide the opportunity to reprioritize sites listed in a previous 1996 regional park-and-ride study, add new sites as needed, identify potential environmental issues early in the design process, and allow CCMPO to work with PennDOT District 2-0 and other local stakeholders to maximize opportunities for use of public right-of-way.

2.3 Safety

2.3.1 Crash Summary

Crash data from January 2017 through December 2021 (five years) was obtained from PennDOT’s Open Data Portal through the Pennsylvania Crash Information Tool (PCIT) and analyzed for US 322 within the project area (PennDOT, 2023²). The crash data reflects the completed improvement projects described in **Table 1**. As shown in **Table 4**, a total of 144 reportable crashes were documented along US 322 within the project area over the five-year period. This includes three fatal crashes, 60 injury crashes, and 81 property damage-only crashes. **Figure 4** provides an overview of the general crash locations along US 322, as well as a “heat map” illustrating the concentration of crashes. Review of this figure reveals that for the most part crashes were scattered along the corridor with a concentration at the unsignalized intersections of US 322 at Elks Club Road/Bear Meadows Road, Neff Road, and Red Mill Road/Mountain Back Road.

Table 4 – US 322 Crash Severity ¹

Roadway	PDO ²	Injury	Fatal	Total
US 322	81 (56%)	60 (42%)	3 (2%)	144
¹ Crash frequencies represent number of crashes (5 year total) involving injuries or fatalities and not the number of injuries or fatalities ² PDO: Property Damage Only (no injuries)				

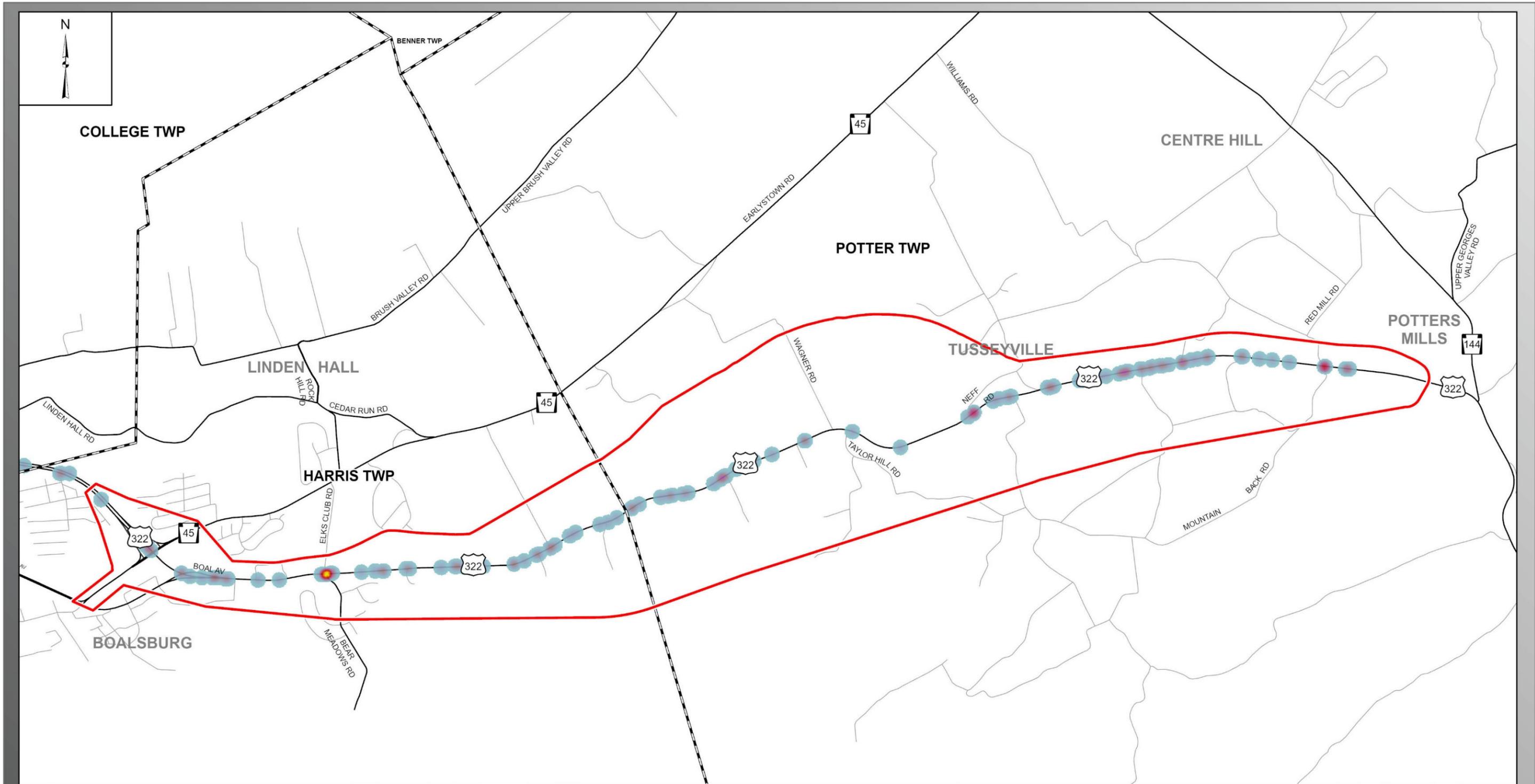
Source: PennDOT, 2023²

An analysis of the crash types indicates that the crashes that occurred most frequently along US 322 in the project area were rear end (42 crashes; 29%) and hit fixed object (40 crashes; 28%). Generally, these types of crashes are a result of mixing of local and through traffic, uncontrolled access along the corridor, and varying vehicle speeds.

Along US 322 in the project area, the majority of the 144 crashes were caused by passenger vehicles (112 crashes; 78%), and approximately 19% of all crashes were caused by a heavy vehicle (trucks or buses). There were no pedestrian or bicycle crashes within the project area.

2.3.2 Highway Safety Analysis

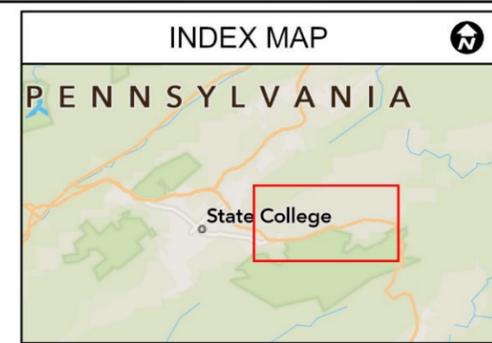
A Highway Safety Manual (HSM) analysis was completed for the existing conditions (updated 5-year historic crash data) as well as for the future Design Year (2050) no-build conditions to evaluate the safety performance of the US 322 within the project area. The HSM provides analytical tools and techniques for quantifying potential effects of crashes for decision-making during the planning, design, operations, and maintenance process. The HSM evaluates how design elements could impact safety. The analysis was



LEGEND

- Project Area
- Municipal Boundaries

Crashes (PCIT Data: 2017-2022)



July 2024

State College Area Connector
US 322 CRASH LOCATIONS AND CONCENTRATIONS

CENTRE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

Figure 4

1 Inch = 3,000 Feet

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performed using PennDOT’s HSM Safety Analysis Tool. The following methodologies were used to calculate the following within the project area:

- **Predicted Average Crash Frequency (Baseline)** – estimate of long-term average crash frequency
- **Expected Average Crash Frequency (Normalized)** – estimate of long-term average crash frequency, calculated based on the observed crash frequency (the project area crash data)
- **Potential for Safety Improvement (PSI)** – estimates of how much long-term crash frequency can be reduced at a site and is represented as the Expected Average Crash Frequency minus the Predicted Average Crash Frequency. A positive PSI identifies areas along a roadway where potential design improvements could improve safety.

The HSM analysis conducted for US 322 indicates that when evaluating the roadway by segment and intersection, there are sections of roadway where the expected number of crashes is greater than the predicted number of crashes (i.e., showing a safety need). These areas are shown on **Figure 5** and listed below:

- From west of Elks Club Road/Bear Meadows Road near Jacks Mill Road to Tusseyview Lane
- From Taylor Hill Road to Red Mill Road/Mountain Back Road

On average, the number of crashes is predicted to increase by 16% from 2021 to the Design Year (2050). These predicted increases in crashes, paired with increased congestion, may exacerbate the crash frequencies experienced within the project area.

2.4 Traffic and Operational Analysis

The operational analysis was conducted for refined traffic volume projections developed during PEL Study (PennDOT, 2023³) and updated with post-COVID traffic volume data collection conducted in fall 2022 and spring 2023. The Centre County Regional Travel Demand Model (TDM) utilized in the PEL Study (PennDOT, 2023³) was also utilized in developing the refined Design Year (2050) traffic projections; this updated TDM considers planned/programmed transportation improvements, future land uses changes, regional travel patterns, transit service, and commercial/freight forecasts. The No Build traffic volumes were determined using the Design Year (2050) TDM. The existing and Design Year (2050) represent traffic conditions of a typical weekday.

2.4.1 Traffic Volumes

Traffic volume data was collected in Fall 2022/Spring 2023 to update current and future year traffic projections and evaluate post-COVID conditions for the project area. **Table 5** provides the Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) and Average Daily Truck Traffic (ADTT) volumes for both Existing Conditions Year (2023) and Design Year (2050) along US 322 within the project area. These US 322 corridor traffic volumes for Existing Year (2023) and Design Year (2050) are illustrated on **Figure 6** and **Figure 7**, respectively.

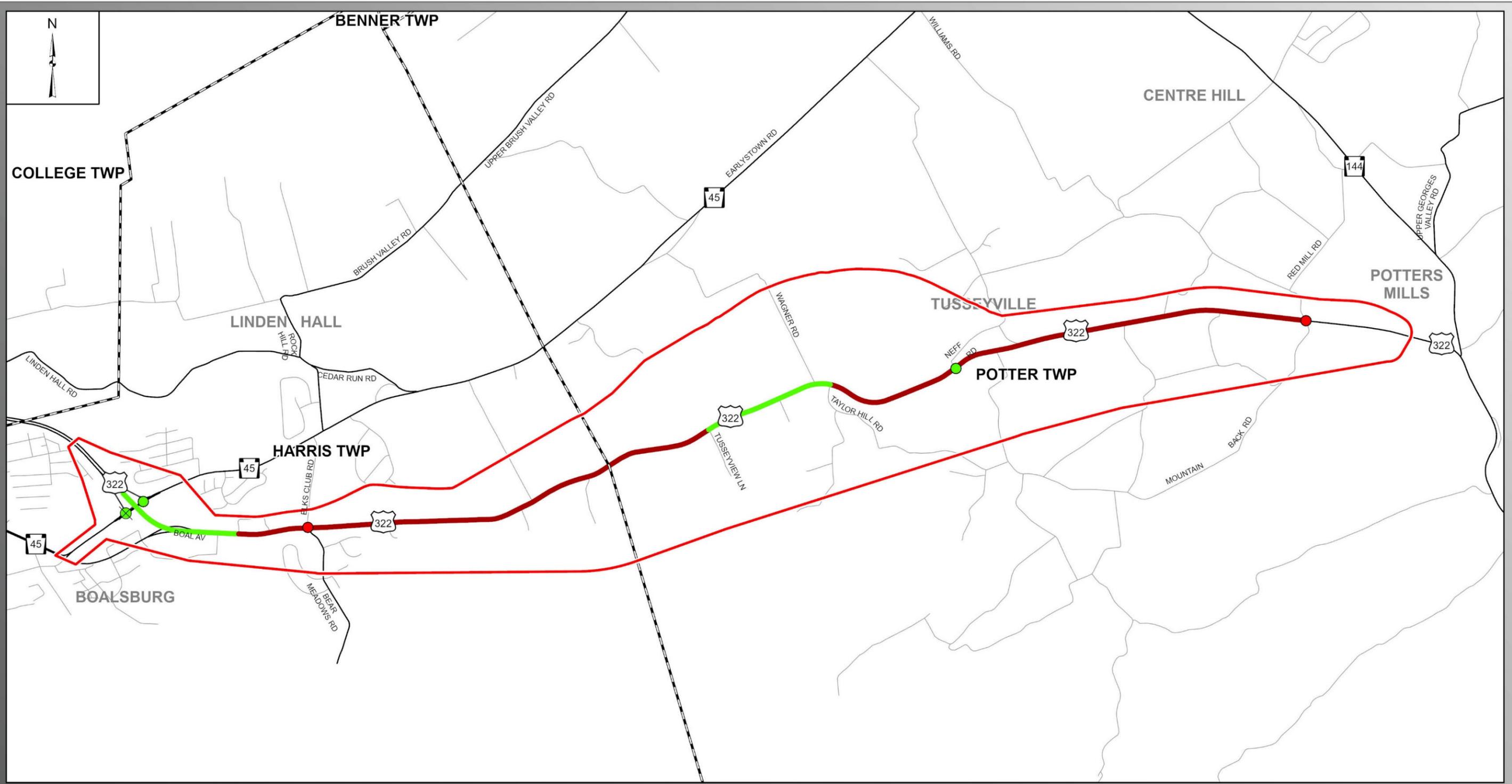
The 2050 No-Build roadway network assumes the completion of the I-99/I-80 High-Speed and I-80 Local Access interchange (SR 0080, Sections B18 and A18), and the I-99/US 322 Waddle Road Interchange Expansion. During the PEL Study, examination of project area roadways determined an overall annual linear growth rate of approximately 1% per year in both total vehicular traffic and truck traffic. Annual linear growth rates for the various project area roadways were also developed and included in the PEL Study; these growth rates were used in developing the updated Design Year (2050) AADT and ADTT volumes. As shown in **Table 5**, total AADT volumes along US 322 are projected to increase at a higher rate than the overall PEL study area roadways, while ADTT on US 322 is projected to grow at the approximate 1% annual linear rate.

Along US 322 in the project area, the existing AADT volumes range between 9,400 vehicles per day (VPD) and 14,900 VPD with truck percentages between 24% and 34%. In the Design Year (2050), AADT volumes along the same segments of US 322 are expected to range between 13,650 VPD and 22,700 VPD.

Table 5 – Traffic Volume Summary

Roadway	Segment		Existing Conditions (Year 2023)		Design Year (2050)		Growth Rate	
	From	To	AADT	ADTT	AADT	ADTT	Total	Truck
US 322	Mount Nittany Expressway	PA 45	14,900	3,600 (24%)	22,700	4,500 (20%)	1.94%	0.93%
	PA 45	Boal Avenue	9,400	3,200 (34%)	13,650	4,000 (29%)	1.67%	0.93%
	Boal Avenue	Elks Club Road	13,800	3,300 (24%)	18,350	4,200 (23%)	1.22%	1.01%
	Elks Club Road	Neff Road	13,200	3,200 (24%)	17,400	4,200 (24%)	1.18%	1.16%
	Neff Road	Red Mill Road/ Mountain Back Road	12,000	3,100 (26%)	17,400	4,200 (24%)	1.67%	1.31%

Notes: AADT Annual Average Daily Traffic, ADTT Average Daily Truck Traffic (%Trucks), and Growth Rate 2023 2050 Annual Growth Rate (linear)



LEGEND

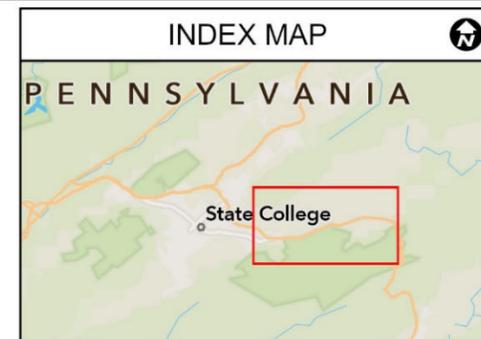
- Project Area
- Municipal Boundaries

Intersection Safety Analysis

- Signal Intersection - Crash estimates are equal to or less than predicted
- Stop Intersection - Crash estimates are equal to or less than predicted
- Stop Intersection - Crash estimates are higher than predicted (PSI)

Route Safety Analysis

- Crash estimates are equal to or less than predicted
- Crash estimates are higher than predicted (PSI)



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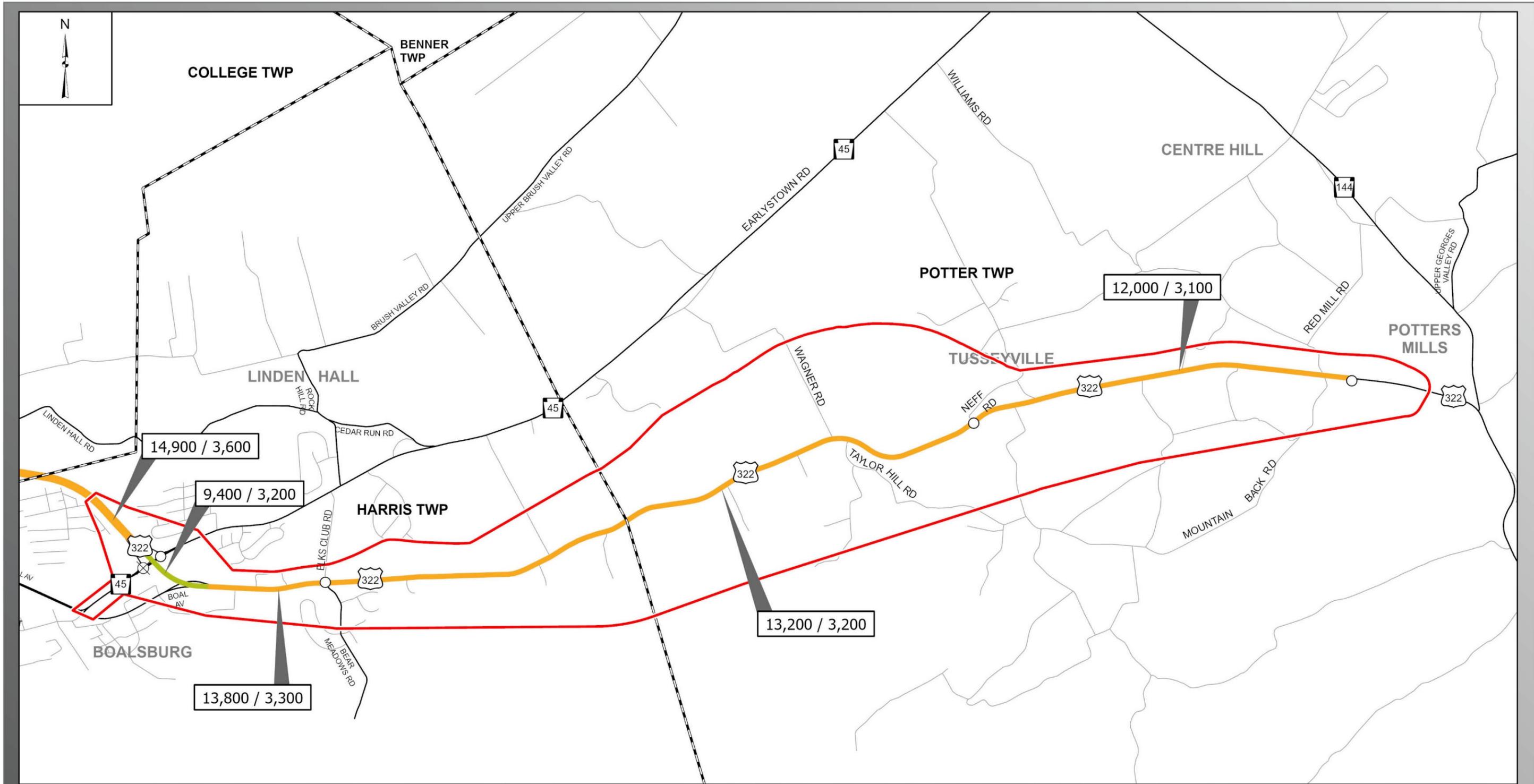
State College Area Connector

HSM ANALYSIS RESULTS

CENTRE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

Figure 5

1 Inch = 3,000 Feet



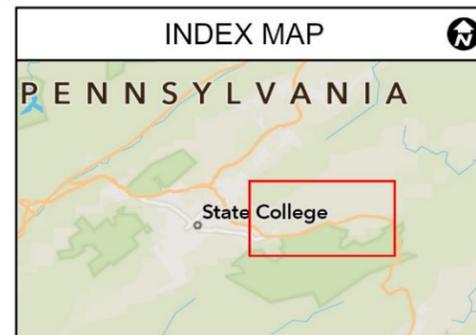
LEGEND

- Project Area
- Municipal Boundaries
- Intersections
 - Signal
 - Stop

Average Daily Traffic Volume

- 0 - 999
- 1,000 - 4,999
- 5,000 - 9,999
- 10,000 - 14,999
- 15,000 - 19,999
- >20,000

8,400 / 300 Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) / Average Annual Daily Truck Traffic (AADTT)



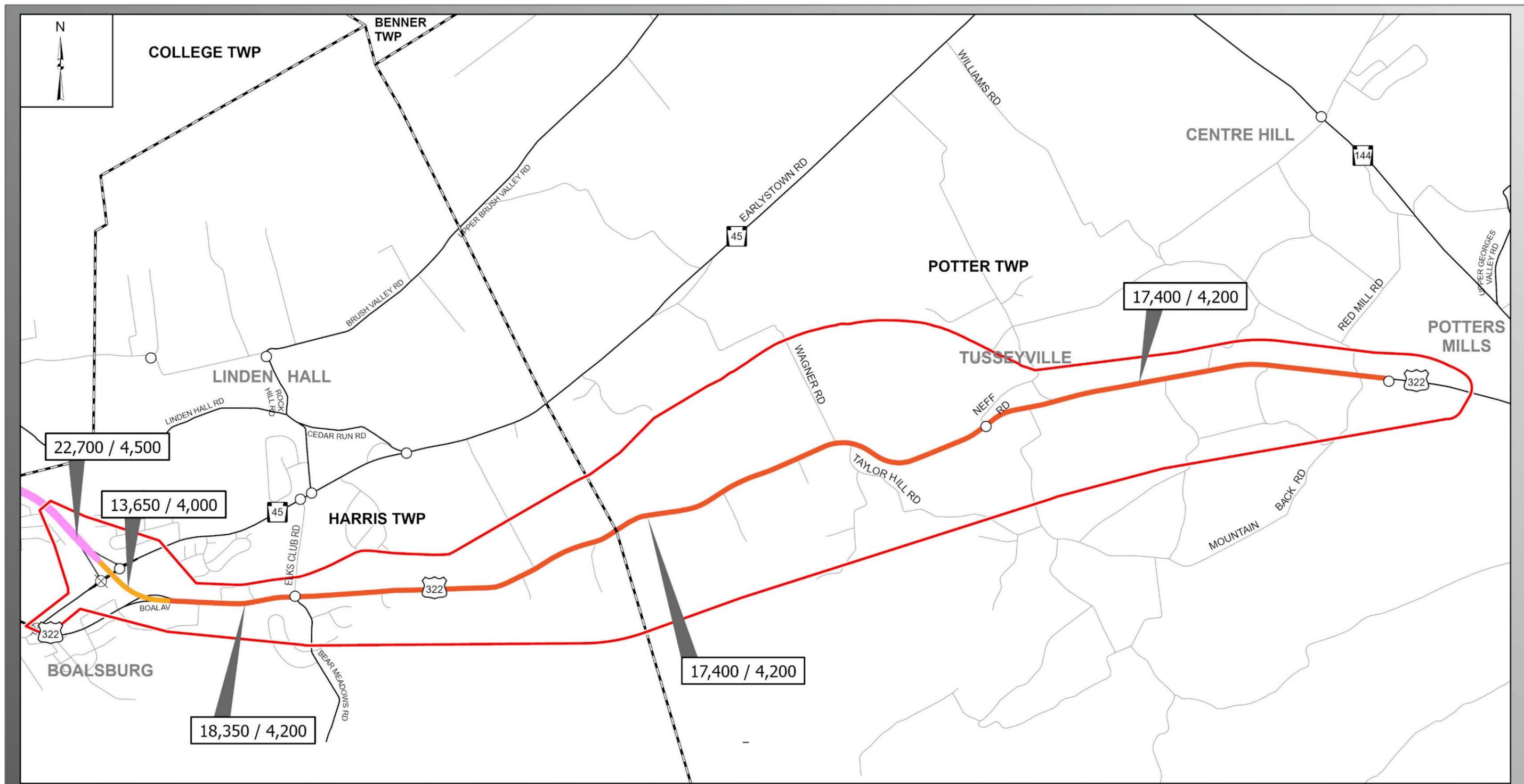
July 2024

State College Area Connector
**EXISTING (BASE YEAR 2023)
AVERAGE DAILY
TRAFFIC VOLUMES**

CENTRE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

Figure 6

1 Inch = 3,000 Feet



LEGEND

- Project Area
- Municipal Boundaries
- Intersections
 - Signal
 - Stop

Average Daily Traffic Volume

- 0 - 999
- 1,000 - 4,999
- 5,000 - 9,999
- 10,000 - 14,999
- 15,000 - 19,999
- >20,000

8,400 / 300 Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) / Average Annual Daily Truck Traffic (AADTT)



July 2024

**State College Area Connector
NO BUILD (DESIGN YEAR 2050)
AVERAGE DAILY
TRAFFIC VOLUMES**

CENTRE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

Figure 7	1 Inch = 3,000 Feet
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Service Layer Credits: Community: Centre County Government, data.pa.gov, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, FAO, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USFWS

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2.4.2 Origin-Destination

An Origin and Destination Study was performed as part of the Traffic Analysis Technical Memorandum for the State College Area Connector PEL Study (PennDOT¹, 2023). The results of that analysis were used in the revised traffic model to support and determine travel patterns for current and future travel.

Along US 322, the origin and destination analysis showed that heavy trucks make primarily regional trips – trip starts and ends outside the traffic study area (**Table 6**). Specifically, 89% of heavy trucks make regional trips, and 100% of all heavy trucks complete regional or commuter trips – trip either starts or ends outside of the traffic study area. Medium trucks, typically used for deliveries, have a similar trip pattern; however, more medium trucks (35%) complete commuter trips. Alternatively, 74% of all passenger vehicles complete more commuter or local trips – trip starts and ends within traffic study area.

Table 6 – Origin-Destination Summary

Type of Vehicle	Trip Types		
	Local Traffic – Trips Start and End Locally		Regional Traffic – Through Trips
Heavy Trucks	0%	11%	89%
Medium Trucks	1%	35%	64%
Passenger Vehicles	4%	70%	26%

2.4.3 Level of Service (LOS)

LOS is a quantitative performance measure that represents the quality of service being provided along a roadway or at an intersection. The measures used to determine LOS for transportation system elements are called service measures. The Highway Capacity Manual (HCM) defines six levels of service, ranging from A to F. LOS A represents the best operating conditions from a traveler's perspective, and LOS F represents the worst (**Figure 8**). Typically, roadways and intersections are not designed to operate at LOS A during peak conditions but instead provide a lower LOS that balances costs and other impacts. The project area consists of both rural and non-rural (urbanized) areas. Current Traffic Engineering Study

Guidelines, Policies, and Procedures contained in PennDOT Publication 282, Appendix A (Policies and Procedures for Transportation Impact Studies Related to Highway Occupancy Permits), defines the following as acceptable intersection LOS requirements for a traffic impact study:

- for rural areas, LOS A through LOS C is considered acceptable operation and unacceptable operation is considered LOS D through LOS F.
- for urbanized areas, LOS A through LOS D is considered acceptable operation and unacceptable operation is considered LOS E and LOS F.

Within the project area, most of the roadways and intersections in Harris Township (i.e., in the vicinity of Boalsburg) are located within an urbanized area; the section of US 322 from 500 feet west of the intersection with Elks Club Road/Bear Meadows Road to the eastern project area boundary lies within a rural area. In urban areas, the target LOS would be LOS D and in the remainder of the project area (e.g. Potter Township and the small portion of Harris Township), the LOS C is the target LOS.

The LOS analysis for peak hour traffic was performed for the following facility types: signalized and un-signalized intersections, two-lane roadway segments, multi-lane roadway segments, freeway segments,

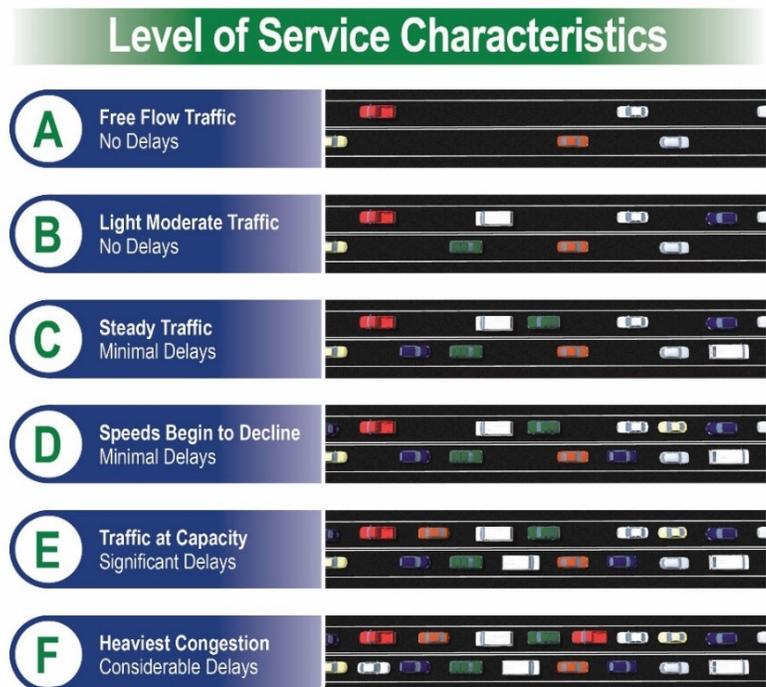


Figure 8 – Level of Service Roadway Characteristics

and ramp segments. **Figure 9** and **Figure 10** illustrate the LOS for the Base Year (2023) and Design Year (2050), respectively. In the Base Year (2023) scenario, the project area intersections primarily operate at acceptable levels of service with the exception of the unsignalized intersection of US 322 and Elks Club Road/Bear Meadows Road, which currently operates at unacceptable LOS during the peak hour time periods. The roadway segment analysis revealed that within the project area, the 2-lane roadway portion of US 322, from the end of the 4-lane Mount Nittany Expressway to the Bear Meadow Road/Elks Club Road intersection and from the Harris/Potter Township line to the 4-lane US 322 section at Potters Mills, currently operates at unacceptable LOS. In some portions of this LOS-deficient roadway, average travel speeds are up to 15% less than the posted speed limit (**Figure 9**).

In the Design Year (2050) scenario, capacity and operations are anticipated to continue to deteriorate. In addition to the unsignalized intersections along US 322 operating at unacceptable LOS (side streets will experience significant delays during the morning and evening peak hours), US 322 EB off-ramp approach will operate at an unacceptable LOS. The analysis further shows that by 2050 the entire section of US 322, from the 2-lane roadway portion of US 322 at the end of the 4-lane Mount Nittany Expressway to the 4-lane section of US 322 at Potters Mills, will operate at unacceptable LOS. Average travel speeds are anticipated to be reduced by up to 15% less than the posted speed limit in this area (**Figure 10**).

In summary, US 322 serves as the main travel route for local, regional, and interstate traffic including trucks. By 2050, the entire length of US 322 will report unacceptable LOS (E or F) and some unsignalized key intersections will also experience LOS F. In addition, the side streets at these intersections will also have unacceptable congestion/delay as they experience extensive delay; these conditions typically exacerbate safety concerns as the more delay motorists experience over time, the smaller gaps they accept and that tends to increase the likelihood of crashes. Overall, increasing traffic will lead to continuing problems with congestion, mixing of local and through traffic, and increasing safety concerns.

3.0 Summary of Transportation Problems and Community Goals

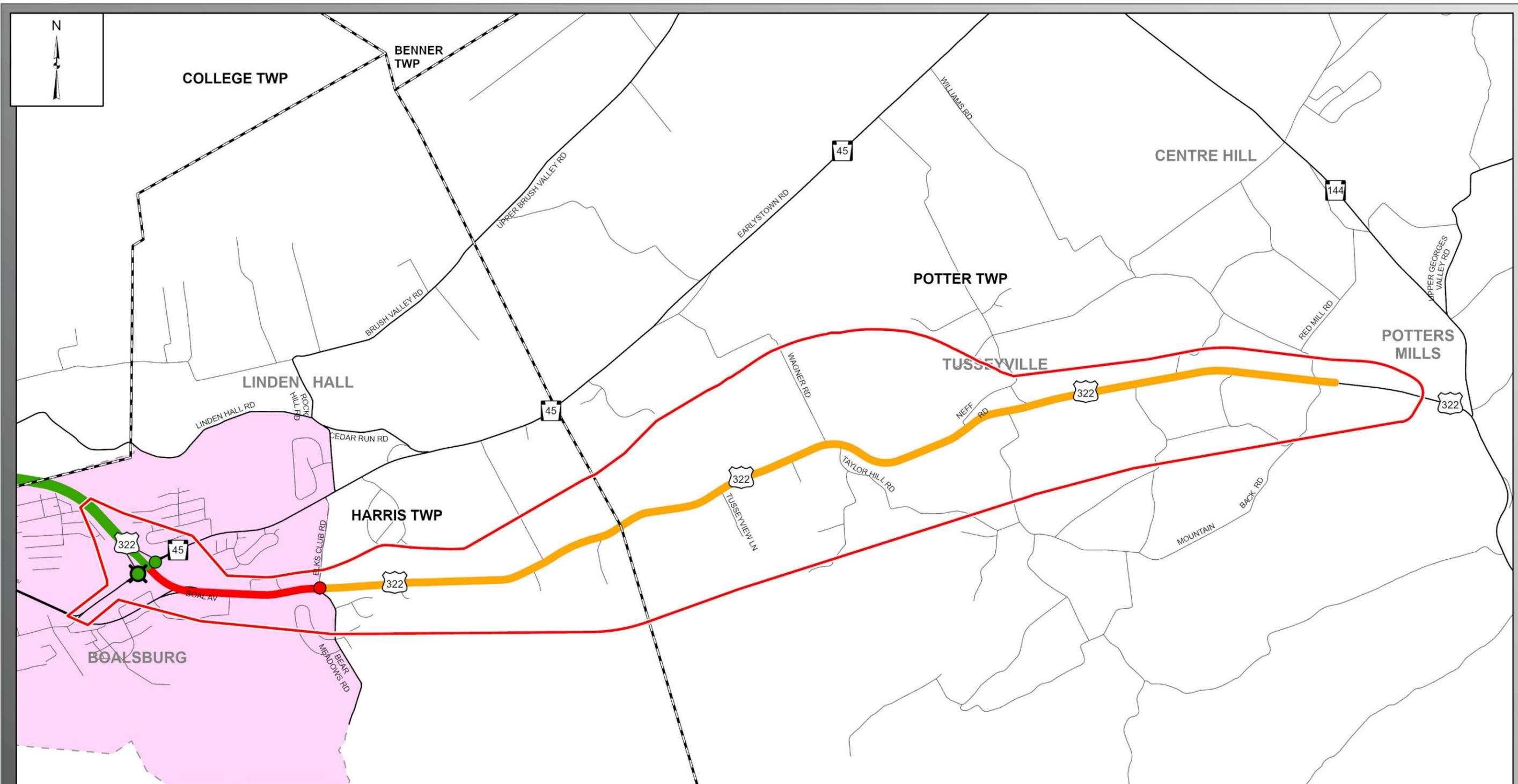
The following provides a summary of the transportation problems identified in the project area that document the need for transportation improvements. Also included is a summary of county and regional planning findings that address not only transportation problems but also community goals identified in adopted county and regional comprehensive plans. This information is intended to facilitate the incorporation of environmental and community values into transportation decisions to the extent practicable.

3.1 Local, County, and Regional Plan Summary

- Following the review of the local, county, and regional plans, the following guiding themes were identified: Promote protection of historic rural communities, preserve the agricultural setting of Penns Valleys and be compatible with local and regional land use plans.
- Address safety problems while preserving rural nature and villages in the study area communities.
- Address recurrent vehicular congestion from high volumes of truck traffic, commuters, and special-event traffic; traveler delays from frequent incidents; and traffic conflicts that result in crashes and safety issues.
- Consider public transit, park-and-ride lots, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and other non-motorized traffic (e.g., horse and buggy) to address commuter and internal travel needs in the project area.

3.2 Traffic and Safety Study Findings

The traffic analysis determined that the State College area continues to be the primary origin/destination for the local market. An increase in traffic from the northwestern and southeastern Pennsylvania regions, in addition to interstate traffic, adds additional traffic, specifically, heavy and medium trucks, on US 322 as a through route for regional and interstate travel purposes. Traffic volumes along US 322 are anticipated to increase and be at unacceptable LOS by 2050. Additionally, the HSM analysis determined that from a safety perspective there are sections along US 322 that have experienced more crashes than predicted which means there is potential for safety improvements in these areas.



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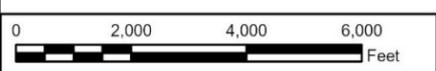
- Project Area
- Municipal Boundaries
- Urban Boundary

Intersections Level of Service

- Signal, Level of Service A-C
- Stop, Level of Service A-C
- Stop, Level of Service E-F

Level of Service

- Level of Service A-C
- Level of Service D
- Level of Service E-F



July 2024

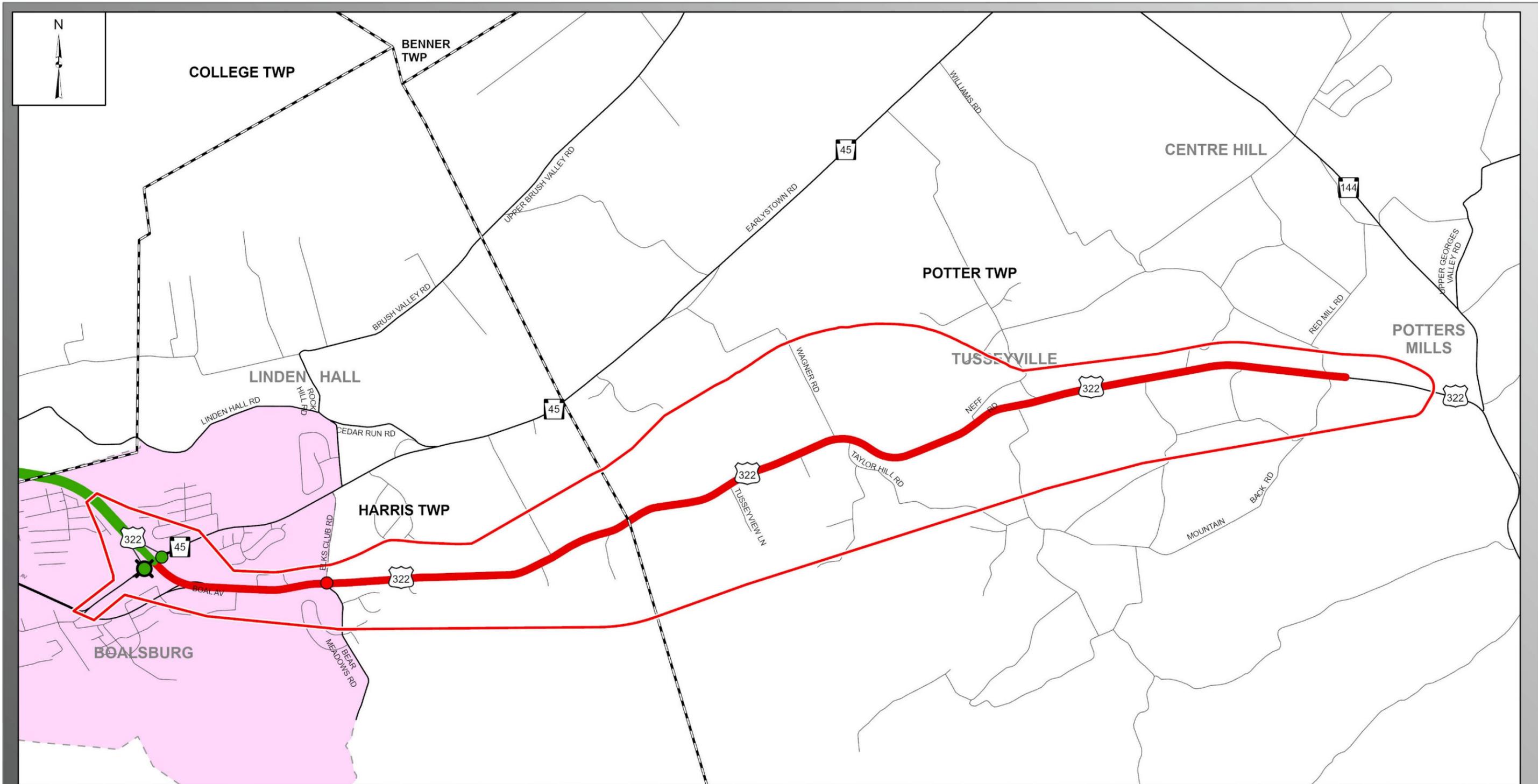
State College Area Connector
**EXISTING (BASE YEAR 2023)
 LEVEL OF SERVICE**

CENTRE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

Figure 9	1 Inch = 3,000 Feet
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Service Layer Credits: Community: Centre County Government, data.pa.gov, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, FAO, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USFWS



LEGEND

- Project Area
- Municipal Boundaries
- Urban Boundary

- Intersections Level of Service
- Signal, Level of Service A-C
 - Signal, Level of Service D
 - Signal, Level of Service E-F
 - Stop, Level of Service A-C
 - Stop, Level of Service D
 - Stop, Level of Service E-F

- Level of Service
- Level of Service A-C
 - Level of Service D
 - Level of Service E-F



July 2024

State College Area Connector
**NO BUILD (DESIGN YEAR 2050)
 LEVEL OF SERVICE**

CENTRE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

Figure 10 1 Inch = 3,000 Feet

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Service Layer Credits: Community: Centre County Government, data.pa.gov, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, FAO, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USFWS

4.0 Project Purpose and Need

The purpose and needs provide a foundation to help identify and evaluate a range of alternatives. As part of the NEPA process, the purpose and need statements will be used as a foundation to evaluate how well the project alternatives meet these identified purpose and needs.

4.1 Project Area Needs

The needs include congestion, safety, and system continuity as summarized below:

- **High peak hour traffic volumes cause congestion and result in unacceptable Level of Service (LOS) (LOS D [rural only], E, or F) on US 322 roadways and intersections.**
 - US 322 serves as the main travel route for local, regional, and interstate traffic, including trucks, within the project area. Currently during peak hours, US 322, between the US 322 Mount Nittany Expressway and the Mountain Back Road/Red Mill Road intersection (just west of Potters Mills), operates at a LOS D or E. The 2050 peak hour traffic volumes are anticipated to increase 41% which will increase congestion and worsen the LOS along the US 322 corridor. In 2050, LOS E is still anticipated for the entire US 322 corridor from the Mount Nittany Expressway to Potters Mills Gap, and travel speed will be further decreased with an average travel speed 15% less than the posted speed limit.
 - Unsignalized intersections along US 322 are anticipated to operate at unacceptable LOS (LOS D, E, or F) due to high volumes of traffic along the uncontrolled main roadway which limit the availability of gaps in the traffic for making turning movements.
 - US 322 averages three times more truck traffic within the project area in comparison to other similar roadways statewide, and truck traffic is expected to increase by 27% along the corridor by 2050. The additional truck traffic increases overall congestion and contributes to unacceptable levels of service.
- **Existing roadway configurations and traffic conditions contribute to safety concerns in the project area.**
 - Crashes were identified along a majority of the US 322 corridor with some concentrations at unsignalized intersections (e.g., Elks Club Road/Bear Meadows Road, Neff Road, and Red Mill Road/Mountain Back Road). Additionally, between 2017 and 2021, nearly 19% of all crashes along US 322 were caused by a heavy vehicle.
 - The Highway Safety Manual (HSM) analysis results indicate the potential for safety improvements along a majority of the US 322 corridor and at unsignalized intersections through the project area. Increasing traffic along US 322 has reduced the number of gaps available for side street and driveway traffic attempting to enter or exit US 322. This causes drivers to make turning movements outside of their comfort zone which contributes to crashes at side street and

driveway intersections. Additionally, the large percentage of through traffic exacerbates the issue as these drivers may be unfamiliar with the roadway characteristics.

- **The roadway network and configuration in the project area lacks continuity and does not meet driver expectations.**
 - US 322 is on the National Highway System and is classified as a principal arterial that is intended to provide long-distance connections. US 322, adjacent to the project area (near both Potters Mills and Boalsburg), is a four-lane, limited-access, divided highway facility with exit and entrance ramps to provide access to the local roadway network. This type of roadway is conducive to higher travel speeds and supports regional and interstate travel patterns. These adjacent sections of US 322 feed traffic into the project area, where US 322 is currently a two-lane, non-divided highway with unrestricted access to driveways and intersecting roadways. The abrupt change in roadway configuration and characteristics creates a roadway network that lacks continuity of facility type and function.
 - Within the project area, US 322 serves local, regional, and interstate traffic (including truck and commuter traffic). The road also services other travel modes including farm equipment traffic and bicycle traffic. The change in the roadway cross-section at both ends of the corridor creates inconsistencies which may not meet driver expectations particularly for regional and interstate traffic. The potential for additional uncontrolled access points along US 322 would continue to degrade roadway continuity along the corridor and create additional locations for conflicts that could result in crashes.

4.2 Project Purpose

The purpose of this project is to improve roadway congestion by achieving acceptable LOS and to address safety issues by reducing the predicted crash frequency along the US 322 corridor between Potters Mills and Boalsburg. Additionally, the project will aim to provide a transportation network that meets driver expectations.

4.3 Logical Termini and Independent Utility

Logical termini are defined as the rational end points for a transportation improvement and the review of the environmental impacts from such an improvement, identified through the concurrent assessment of the identified project needs and purpose and of known features (land uses, population concentrations, cross route locations, etc.). FHWA guidance on the determination of logical termini (FHWA, 1993) recommends that termini be established such that a project/proposal should:

- Connect logical termini and is of sufficient length to address environmental matters on a broad scale,
- Will not restrict consideration of alternatives for other reasonably foreseeable transportation improvements, and
- Has independent utility or independent significance, i.e., be useable, and be a reasonable expenditure even if no additional transportation improvements in the area are made [23 CFR 771.111(f)].

Based on federal guidance and historic case law, the key criteria used to identify and confirm the logical termini and independent utility for this project included:

- Rational endpoints for project specific alternative development,
- Rational endpoints for impact analysis,
- Project serves a significant purpose by itself, even if other projects are not constructed,
- Does not restrict consideration of alternatives for other reasonably foreseeable transportation improvements,
- Does not force other improvements with unforeseen impacts.

4.3.1 Logical Termini

For the State College Area Connector project, the logical termini in the western portion of the project area are US 322 (Mt. Nittany Expressway) and in the eastern portion of the project area are US 322 (Potters Mills Gap). At both endpoints, US 322, Mt. Nittany Expressway and Potters Mills Gap sections, is a four-lane limited access highway that provides high capacity and efficient conveyance of traffic. US 322 (Mt. Nittany Expressway) provides traffic traveling along the corridor to and through Centre County's economic hub of State College and links to points south, east, and west via I-99 and I-80. US 322 (Potters Mills Gap) provides connections for traffic traveling along the corridor to Harrisburg and links to points south, east, and west via I-83 and I-81. The project area between the Mt. Nittany Expressway and Potters Mills Gap sections of US 322 provides sufficient length (approximately 8 miles) to fully identify and evaluate environmental impacts. Both termini roadways were also found to operate at an acceptable LOS and could accommodate additional future traffic (LOS C, LOS D or better).

4.3.2 Independent Utility

Any proposed alternative will help to remedy existing transportation issues and meet future mobility and access needs. The project will have independent utility, will be usable, and will be reasonable expenditure even if no other transportation improvements are made in the area.

4.3.3 No Potential for Forcing Other Transportation Improvements

With high-capacity connections at each end of the project area, the proposed improvements would not force other improvements or cause unforeseen impacts. Any project-related impacts would be addressed as part of this project proposal. Therefore, the project would not require additional improvements in other areas to be effective nor does it restrict consideration of alternatives for other reasonably foreseeable transportation improvements.

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PennDOT. 2023³. State College Area Connector Project Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study. June 2023 with FHWA acknowledged on September 14, 2023.

APPENDIX B – COORDINATION PLAN FOR AGENCY INVOLVEMENT



Agency Coordination Plan for the State College Area Connector Project



July 2024
Project Identification #: 112784

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Coordination Plan

The purpose of the *State College Area Connector Project Agency Coordination Plan* (Coordination Plan) is to define the process for meeting the agency requirements in the environmental review process, including the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and related laws. The purpose of the coordination plan is to facilitate and document structured and meaningful interaction with the federal and state resource agencies, and to inform the agencies of how coordination will be accomplished, and feedback will be received.

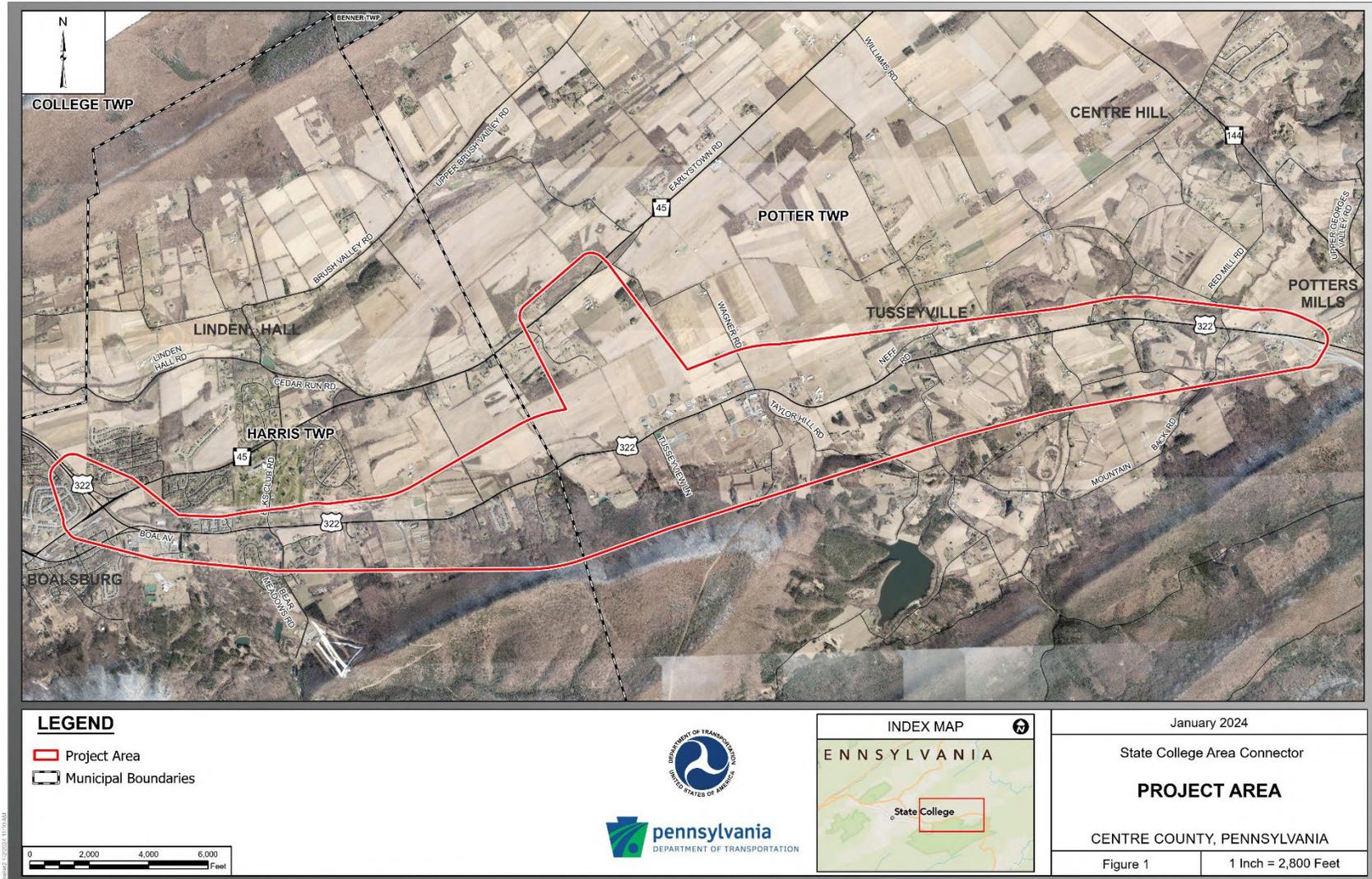
The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) requires that not later than 90 days after the date of publication of a notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) the lead agency shall "establish a plan for coordinating public and agency participation in and comment on the environmental review process for a project."

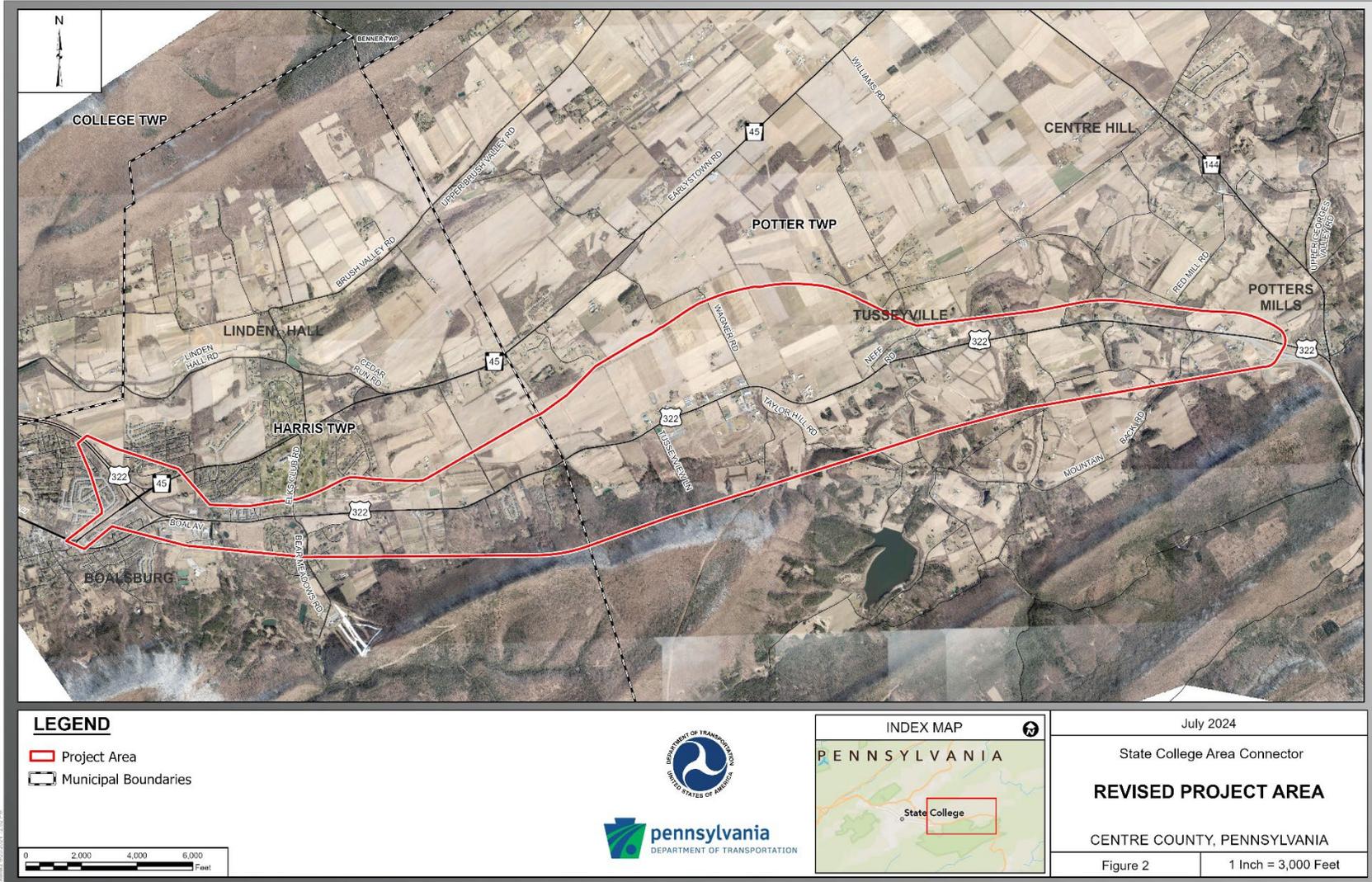
Per the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) Publication 10B (Design Manual Part 1B: Post-TIP NEPA Procedures, April 2022 edition), the coordination plan must be shared with the public and with participating agencies so that they know what to expect and so that any disputes are surfaced as early as possible.

1.2 Project Description

PennDOT, in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), is initiating NEPA activities as part of an EIS for an 8-mile 4-lane limited-access facility from the end of US 322/Mount Nittany Expressway in Boalsburg to the newly constructed limited access portion of US 322 at Potters Mills in Centre County, Pennsylvania. The intent of this project is to build upon the State College Area Connector Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) document that evaluated a range of alternatives, and through a quantitative and qualitative screening process identified three Build Alternative corridor options for further study in NEPA and established the NEPA project area (**Figure 1**).

Subsequent to the PEL completion, additional traffic investigations and analysis and coordination with local officials for the State College Area Connector project determined that the connector road and interior interchange (included in each of the PEL US 322 Build Alternatives) would provide some localized improvements to PA 45. However, it was determined that the connector road and associated interchange was not necessary to address the project's purpose and need, nor did it address corridor wide issues along PA 45. As a result, the proposed interior interchange and local road connection was removed from this State College Area Connector project and will be considered in the independent PA 45 Corridor Improvements project, as appropriate. The State College Area Connector project will advance independently but will not preclude the inclusion of a future interior interchange and local road connection should the independent safety study along PA 45 determine that it would be beneficial in connection with other proposed PA 45 Corridor Improvements project. **Figure 2** provides the revised project area for the State College Area Connector project that will move forward for alternative development and investigation.





1.3 Purpose and Need

1.3.1 Project Purpose

The purpose of this project is to improve roadway congestion by achieving acceptable LOS and to address safety issues by reducing the predicted crash frequency along the US 322 corridor between Potters Mills and Boalsburg. Additionally, the project will aim to provide a transportation network that meets driver expectations.

1.3.2 Project Need

Within the project area, there are transportation issues associated with high levels of congestion, potential safety issues along the roadway network, and a roadway network which presents a driver with irregular travel patterns and unexpected driving conditions. The following provides a summary of the needs statements and supporting documentation.

High peak hour traffic volumes cause congestion and result in unacceptable Level of Service (LOS) (LOS D [rural only], E, or F) on US 322 roadways and intersections.

- US 322 serves as the main travel route for local, regional, and interstate traffic, including trucks, within the project area. Currently during peak hours, US 322, between the US 322 Mount Nittany Expressway and the Mountain Back Road/Red Mill Road intersection (just west of Potters Mills), operates at a LOS D or E. The 2050 peak hour traffic volumes are anticipated to increase 41% which will increase congestion and worsen the LOS along the US 322 corridor. In 2050, LOS E is still anticipated for the entire US 322 corridor from the Mount Nittany Expressway to Potters Mills Gap, and travel speed will be further decreased with an average travel speed 15% less than the posted speed limit.
- Unsignalized intersections along US 322 are anticipated to operate at unacceptable LOS (LOS D, E, or F) due to high volumes of traffic along the uncontrolled main roadway which limit the availability of gaps in the traffic for making turning movements.
- US 322 averages three times more truck traffic within the project area in comparison to other similar roadways statewide, and truck traffic is expected to increase by 27% along the corridor by 2050. The additional truck traffic increases overall congestion and contributes to unacceptable levels of service.

Existing roadway configurations and traffic conditions contribute to safety concerns in the project area.

- Crashes were identified along a majority of the US 322 corridor with some concentrations at unsignalized intersections (e.g., Elks Club Road/Bear Meadows Road, Neff Road, and Red Mill Road/Mountain Back Road). Additionally, between 2017 and 2021, nearly 19% of all crashes along US 322 were caused by a heavy vehicle.
- The Highway Safety Manual (HSM) analysis results indicate the potential for safety improvements along a majority of the US 322 corridor and at unsignalized intersections through the project area. Increasing traffic along US 322 has reduced

the number of gaps available for side street and driveway traffic attempting to enter or exit US 322. This causes drivers to make turning movements outside of their comfort zone which contributes to crashes at side street and driveway intersections. Additionally, the large percentage of through traffic exacerbates the issue as these drivers may be unfamiliar with the roadway characteristics.

The roadway network and configuration in the project area lacks continuity and does not meet driver expectations.

- US 322 is on the National Highway System and is classified as a principal arterial that is intended to provide long-distance connections. US 322, adjacent to the project area (near both Potters Mills and Boalsburg), is a four-lane, limited-access, divided highway facility with exit and entrance ramps to provide access to the local roadway network. This type of roadway is conducive to higher travel speeds and supports regional and interstate travel patterns. These adjacent sections of US 322 feed traffic into the project area, where US 322 is currently a two-lane, non-divided highway with unrestricted access to driveways and intersecting roadways. The abrupt change in roadway configuration and characteristics creates a roadway network that lacks continuity of facility type and function.
- Within the project area, US 322 serves local, regional, and interstate traffic (including truck and commuter traffic). The road also services other travel modes including farm equipment traffic and bicycle traffic. The change in the roadway cross-section at both ends of the corridor creates inconsistencies which may not meet driver expectations particularly for regional and interstate traffic. The potential for additional uncontrolled access points along US 322 would continue to degrade roadway continuity along the corridor and create additional locations for conflicts that could result in crashes.

1.3.3 Project History

Within the State College Area Connector project area, there have been many transportation improvement studies and projects that have influenced travel within and immediately adjacent to the project area dating back to the 1970s. However, in the 1990s, key regional studies occurred which greatly influenced travel and development within the project area. The following provides a high-level summary of the local and regional transportation projects which have provided influence on the State College Area Connector project area.

Interstate 80

- I-80 was completed in Pennsylvania in 1970.
- I-80 through Pennsylvania influenced traffic patterns, particularly an increase in interstate truck traffic. This increase in traffic affected travel conditions within the project area.
- Roadway safety and quality of life in Centre County communities traversed by these roadways were influenced by the I-80 completion.

Interstate 99

- US 220 study west of the State College area led to the development of a major improvement project for a new north-south interstate through Centre County that

culminated with the construction of I-99 extending from Blair County to US 322 (the Mount Nittany Expressway).

- PA 26 corridor study resulted in the construction of I-99 from US 322 (the Mount Nittany Expressway) north towards I-80.
- I-80 Exit 161 (Bellefonte Interchange) is under development to replace the existing interchange with a new high-speed interchange and complete the I-99/I-80 connection. Construction of the interchange improvements will complete the goal for a major north-south interstate (I-99) through the center of the Commonwealth connecting two major east-west interstates, the Pennsylvania Turnpike (I-76) and I-80.

South Central Centre County Transportation Study (SCCCTS)

- SCCCTS was initiated in 1998 to evaluate and address transportation needs along the US 322, PA 144, and PA 45 corridors. The SCCCTS project needs identified specific transportation problems in each of the three corridors and on the local road system, as well as needs associated with regional travel patterns. The regional travel pattern need statement addressed the high percentage of through trips (in particular the high volume of truck traffic), high crash rates (including fatalities), poor Level of Service (LOS) including LOS associated with heavy truck traffic and increases in travel demand associated with local and regional planned development. However, SCCCTS was terminated in 2004 due to funding shortfalls and the NOI rescinded on July 29, 2019.

Safety Improvements

- Following the termination of SCCCTS in 2004, short-term safety improvements along the US 322 corridor were conducted between 2006 and 2015. These improvements included general intersection improvements (e.g., turn lanes), safety improvements (e.g., safety dot warning pavement markings and removal of passing zones), minor roadway realignments, and bridge reconstruction. These improvements were initiated to address some of the safety concerns identified during the SCCCTS study.

Potters Mills Gap (PMG) Transportation Project

- PennDOT and FHWA initiated the PMG Transportation Project to improve a 3.75-mile-long section of US 322 in Potter Township within the area locally known as “Potters Mills Gap”. This project area encompassed the southeastern portion of the SCCCTS study area. It was determined that this project had independent utility and addressed a defined purpose and need. The project included the construction of a new limited access four-lane roadway section that started at the Sand Mountain Road intersection and extended west, tying back into existing US 322 with a new interchange and roundabout, west of the PA 144/US 322 intersection.

SCCCTS Data Refresh

- In 2018, PennDOT collected data to update the traffic and environmental information from the former SCCCTS (2004), to identify changes to travel patterns, the transportation network, and environmental conditions. This information supported the 2019 decision by state officials to restart efforts to address regional transportation needs in the US 322, PA 44, and PA 45 area. Nearly, \$15 million in state funding was allocated to advance the State College Area Connector Study.

State College Area Connector Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study

- In 2020, PennDOT, in cooperation with FHWA and coordination with the Centre County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), initiated the State College Area Connector PEL Study. The PEL process promoted early coordination with the public as well as federal, state, and local agencies in a transparent and collaborative environment that identified and evaluated transportation needs in the area and developed and evaluated alternatives while considering community concerns in transportation decision-making early in the planning process. The PEL study identified a range of alternatives and screened them against the purpose and need and potential for environmental impacts. Three Build Alternatives corridors were recommended for further study. These three recommended Build Alternatives and a refined study area are being advanced for NEPA study with a Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS.

1.4 Project Agency Coordination History

During the State College Area Connector PEL Study, a robust agency engagement plan was developed and implemented that included Agency Coordination Meetings and field views. This coordination effort and level will be continued throughout the NEPA/EIS phase of the project.

1.4.1 Agency Coordination Meetings

During the State College Area Connector PEL Study, the study team presented the study and associated results at Agency Coordination Meetings. **Table 1** provides an overview of the PEL meeting dates and information presented as well as the NEPA/EIS meeting dates.

Table 1: Agency Coordination Meeting Summary

Date	Topic Discussed
February 26, 2020	Introduce PEL Study
July 22, 2020	PEL Study Process Environmental Features Purpose and Need Coordination Plan Agency Participation
November 6, 2020	Study Update Coordination Plan Comments Consensus Process Concurrence Process PEL Process and Schedule
December 9, 2020	Study update Purpose and Need Cooperating and Participating Agency Status Draft Coordination Plan and Consensus Virtual Public Meeting Overview Environmental Features

Date	Topic Discussed
May 26, 2021	Environmental Overview Range of Alternatives Alternative Screening Process Methodology
August 25, 2021	PEL Process Recap Environmental WebMap and Technical Memos Range of Alternatives Alternatives Screening Other Potential Future Project Concepts Public Engagement Next steps
December 8, 2021	September Public Meeting Summary Environmental Data Update Technical Memos Update Build Alternative Update Revised Agency Coordination Plan Schedule
March 23, 2022	September Public Meeting Overview Environmental Mapping Updates Traffic Updates Build Alternative Updates Next Steps
May 25, 2022	April 2022 Public Meeting Summary Range of Alternatives and Alternative Screening Process Alternatives Review PEL Process Next Steps
August 24, 2022	Alternative Screening Process Environmental Resources Potential Impacts and Comparative Analysis Traffic, Engineering and Planning Comparative Analysis Next Steps
February 22, 2023	October 2022 Public Meeting Summary Draft PEL Report Build Alternative option recommendations to advance in NEPA
June 28, 2023	Final PEL results EIS Scoping Environmental Methodologies
January 24, 2024	EIS Purpose and Need Draft Agency Coordination Plan

1.4.1 Agency Field Views

Two field views were conducted with the federal and state permitting agencies to review the study area during the PEL Study. **Table 2** provides a summary of the dates and agencies represented.

Table 2: Agency Field View Summary

Date	Agencies
July 19, 2022	US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) PA Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP)
August 1, 2022	US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

2 Lead, Cooperating and Participating Agencies

2.1 Agency Roles and Responsibilities

2.1.1 Lead Agency

The role of the Federal Lead Agency implementing the federal action is to ensure compliance with the requirements in NEPA. For the State College Area Connector Project, FHWA will be the lead Federal agency for the environmental analysis and decision-making. PennDOT will be the lead state agency with responsibility for completing the environmental analysis and preparing the documentation.

2.1.2 Cooperating Agencies

Cooperating agencies are those governmental agencies and/or tribes specifically requested by the lead agency to participate in the environmental evaluation process for the project. FHWA’s NEPA regulations (23 CFR 771.111(d)) requires that those federal agencies with jurisdiction by law (e.g., with permitting or land transfer authority) or special expertise with respect to any environmental impact or resource involved in an environmental review or alternative be invited to be cooperating agencies.

During the State College Area Connector Project, cooperating agencies will be asked to:

- Participate in the NEPA process.
- Participate in the scoping process.
- Assume responsibility for developing information and preparing environmental analyses, including portions of the environmental impact statement for which the cooperating agency has special expertise, upon request by the lead agency.
- Provide available staff support to enhance the lead agency's interdisciplinary capability, upon request by the lead agency.
- Use its own funds. To the extent available funds permit, the lead agency shall fund those major activities or analyses it requests from cooperating agencies. Potential lead agencies shall include such funding requirements in their budget requests.
- Consult with the lead agency in developing the schedule (§40 CFR 1501.7(i)), meet the schedule, and elevate, as soon as practicable, to the senior agency official of the lead agency any issues relating to purpose and need, alternatives, or other issues that may affect any agencies' ability to meet the schedule.
- Meet the schedule for providing comments and limiting its comments to those matters for which it has jurisdiction by law or special expertise concerning any environmental issue.
- Issue joint environmental documents with the lead agency, when practicable.

During the PEL Study, FHWA invited various agencies to be cooperating agencies in the PEL with the intent that the cooperating agency status would continue in the NEPA phase of project development. **Table 3** outlines the cooperating agencies that were invited by FHWA Pennsylvania Division to be cooperating agencies during the PEL and NEPA processes for the State College Area Connector.

Table 3: Cooperating Agency Status

Agency	Status
United States Army Corps of Engineers	Accepted
United States Environmental Protection Agency	Accepted
United States Fish and Wildlife Service	Accepted
National Park Service	Declined
Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection - Northcentral Regional Office	Accepted
Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PA PHMC)/Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office (PA SHPO)*	Accepted

* Changed from participating to cooperating agency status between PEL and NEPA studies.

2.1.3 Participating Agencies

Participating agencies include any federal, state, tribal, regional, and local public agencies that have an interest in the proposed project and the environmental review process.

During the State College Area Connector Project, participating agencies will be asked to:

- Identify, as early as practicable, any issues of concern regarding potential impacts on the natural, cultural, or human environment.
- Provide meaningful and early input on relevant issues such as the study purpose and needs, the range of alternatives to be considered, and the methodologies and level of detail required in the alternatives analysis.
- Participate in coordination meetings and field reviews with other environmental resource agencies, as appropriate.
- Adhere to timeframes for reviewing and commenting on administrative copies of environmental documentation, including the draft and final EIS.

During the PEL Study, FHWA invited various agencies to be participating agencies in the PEL with the intent that the participating agency status would continue in the NEPA phase of project development. **Table 4** outlines the participating agencies that were invited by FHWA Pennsylvania Division to be cooperating agencies during the PEL and NEPA processes for the State College Area Connector.

Table 4: Participating Agency Status

Agency	Status
Federal and State Agencies	
United States Coast Guard	No response
Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission	Accepted
Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PA DCNR)	Accepted
Pennsylvania Game Commission	Accepted
Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture	Accepted
Local Agencies	
Centre County Conservation District (CCCD)	Accepted
Centre County Board of Commissioners	Accepted
Potter Township Board of Supervisors	No response
Spring Township Board of Supervisors	No response
Benner Township Board of Supervisors	No response
Harris Township Board of Supervisors	Accepted
College Township Council	Accepted
Centre Hall Borough Council	No response
Federally Recognized Tribes	
Absentee-Shawnee Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma	No response
Delaware Nation	No response
Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma	No response
Oneida Nation	No response
Seneca Nation of Indians	Accepted
Seneca-Cayuga Nation	No response
Shawnee Tribe	No response
Delaware Tribe of Indians	Accepted

2.2 Agency Contact Information

Table 5 provides the agency contact information for cooperating and participating agencies.

Table 5: Cooperating and Participating Agency Contact

Name	Point of Contact Name and Address	Email	Phone
Cooperating Agencies			
PA DEP Northcentral Regional Office	Steven Putt 208 W. Third St., Suite 101 Williamsport, PA 17701	Stputt@pa.gov	570-327-0527
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District, Regulatory	Marion Gall (Interim) State College Field Office 1631 South Atherton Street, Suite 101 State College, PA 16801-6260	Marion.gall@usace.army.mil	(814) 235-1761
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	1650 Arch Street (mailcode 3RA12) Philadelphia, PA 19103	Witman.timothy@epa.gov - main contact Davis.jamie@epa.gov - PDOT reviewer	215-814-2775
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Jennifer Kagel 110 Radnor Rd., Suite 101 State College, PA 16803	jennifer_kagel@fws.gov	814-206-7451
PHMC, Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office (PA SHPO)	Emma Diehl and Casey Hanson, Historic Preservation Specialists 400 North Street, 2nd Floor Commonwealth Keystone Building Harrisburg PA 17120	ediehl@pa.gov and chanson@pa.gov	717-772-4519
Participating Agencies			
Centre County Conservation District	414 Holmes Street Suite 4 Bellefonte, PA 16823	jrcoslo@centrecountypa.gov	814-355-6817
Centre County Government	420 Holmes Street Bellefonte, PA 16823	Rjstolinas@centrecountypa.gov	814-355-6791

Name	Point of Contact Name and Address	Email	Phone
College Township	Adam Brumbaugh, Township Manager 1481 E. College Ave. State College PA 16801	abrumbaugh@collegetownship.org	814-231-3021
Harris Township	Frank Harden 224 East Main Street PO Box 20 Boalsburg, PA 16827	Fharden@harristownship.org	814-466-7495
PA Department of Agriculture	Douglas Wolfgang Director Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Bureau of Farmland Preservation 2301 North Cameron Street Harrisburg, PA 17110	Dowolfgang@pa.gov	717-783-3167
PA Department Conservation and Natural Resources	Stephanie Seymour Ecological Information Specialist PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources Bureau of Forestry Natural Heritage Section 400 Market Street, PO Box 8552 Harrisburg, PA 17105	c-steseymo@pa.gov	717-705-2819
PA Fish and Boat	Bill Savage PFBC Centre Region Office, 595 East Rolling Ridge Drive, Bellefonte, PA 16823	wisavage@pa.gov	814-359-5145 (office) 814-470-7177 (work cell)
PA Game Commission	Sue Guers 2001 Elmerton Avenue Harrisburg, PA 17110	suguers@pa.gov	717-787-4250 ext. 73412

Name	Point of Contact Name and Address	Email	Phone
Delaware Tribe of Indians	Susan Bachor, M.A. Archaeologist Delaware Tribe Historic Preservation 126 University Circle Stroud Hall, Room 437 East Stroudsburg, PA 18301	Sbachor@delawaretribe.org or Temple@delawaretribe.org	570-422-2023 610-761-7452 (cell – preferred)
Seneca Nation of Indians	Dr. Joe Stahlman 82 W. Hetzel St. Salamanca, NY 14779	joe.stahlman@sni.org	716-277-5580

3 Agency Coordination Point

Table 6 provides the agency coordination points for cooperating and participating agencies.

Table 6: Agency Coordination Points

Coordination Point	Date of/Anticipated Date of Coordination	Information Included for Coordination	Agencies Involved	Input/Consensus Requested	Timeframe for Input
Project Initiation	February 26, 2020	- PEL Process	All ACM participants	NA	
Environmental Analysis Methodologies	July 22, 2020	- PEL Study Process - Environmental Features - Purpose and Need - Coordination Plan - Agency participation	All ACM participants	NA	
PEL Purpose and Need	December 9, 2020	- Study update - Purpose and Need - Cooperating and Participating Agency Status - Draft Coordination Plan and Consensus - Virtual Public Meeting Overview - Environmental Features	All ACM participants	Cooperating Agency Concurrence	35 days post meeting
Range of Alternatives	May 26, 2021	- Environmental Overview - Range of Alternatives - Alternative Screening Process Methodology	All ACM participants	Cooperating Agency Concurrence	35 days post meeting
Project Section 106 Initiation	March 27, 2023	- Project notification distributed via PennDOT's PATH		Determine interest in becoming a consulting party	

Coordination Point	Date of/Anticipated Date of Coordination	Information Included for Coordination	Agencies Involved	Input/Consensus Requested	Timeframe for Input
EIS Scoping Meeting	June 28, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PEL Alternatives to advance - Environmental Analysis Methodologies 	All ACM participants	Cooperating Agency Concurrence on PEL Alternatives to advance for NEPA review	
Project Purpose and Need	January 24, 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NEPA/EIS Draft Purpose and Need 		Consensus on Purpose and Need for EIS	
Detailed Alternatives Analysis	July 2024				
Recommended Alternative/Conceptual Mitigation	February 2025				
Draft EIS Circulation	July 2025				
Public Hearing	August 2025				
Preferred Alternative/Mitigation	September 2025				
Jurisdictional Determination (JD) (if required)/ Pre-Application Meeting	September 2025				
Final EIS/ Record of Decision (ROD)/ Conceptual Mitigation	July 2026				

4 Agency Coordination

4.1 Agency Coordination

PennDOT uses Agency Coordination Meetings (ACMs) to regularly inform agencies of the project status and seek input on decisions related to the location of the project alternatives. Throughout the PEL Study, presentations have been made at ACMs. The specific meeting dates of the ACM meetings are mentioned above in Section 1.4 Project Agency Coordination History. During the PEL Study, cooperating agencies were asked to provide concurrence at study milestones to ensure the PEL studies met the agencies expectations and would seamlessly transition to the NEPA process. These concurrence points include purpose and need concurrence at the December 2020 ACM, range of alternatives at the May 2021 ACM, and alternatives to carry forward into NEPA at the June 2023 ACM. The June 2023 ACM also initiated the EIS project scoping and presented the environmental methodologies to be used in the study.

PennDOT will seek input and general consensus from the agencies going forward, as formal concurrence will not be requested for the NEPA phase of the project. This process will be shared with the agencies at the January 2024 ACM. When certain milestones are reached and relevant documents are available for consideration, such as the project purpose and need, the materials will be sent to the agency representatives two weeks in advance of the scheduled ACM meeting, when possible. A particular topic will be discussed at the meeting and the team will facilitate open dialogue about any concerns or issues at the time.

Agencies will have an additional two weeks after the ACM to provide comments. If an agency provides comments that are deemed 'significant', the project team will work directly with that agency to address those comments. Additional project information may also be provided to the agency, when available.

4.2 Section 106 Coordination

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 requires that agencies that use federal funds consider their projects' effects on historic properties. The National Park Service defines historic properties as "any prehistoric or historic districts, sites, buildings, structures, or objects that are eligible for or already listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Also included are any artifacts, records, and remains (surface or subsurface) that are related to and located within historic properties and any properties of traditional religious and cultural importance to tribes or native Hawaiian organizations."

PennDOT must determine if a proposed action is an undertaking with the potential to affect historic properties and, if so, plan to involve the public and identify consulting parties. Participants in the Section 106 process may include the SHPO, local governments, Indian tribes, interested parties, and the public.

PennDOT has invited parties to participate in consultation and will provide basic information about the undertaking to all parties, as available. The federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) will also be invited to participate.

PennDOT utilizes the Pennsylvania Transportation and Heritage (PATH) website to post all documents produced pursuant to Section 106 and State History Code. All relevant documents will be posted and made available to the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) and any additional organization that signs up as a result of receiving the project early notification correspondence.

4.3 Agricultural Lands Condemnation Approval Board

Pennsylvania Act 1979-100 established the Agricultural Lands Condemnation Approval Board (ALCAB), a six-member independent administrative board. For this type of roadway improvement project, ALCAB must approve any Pennsylvania agency's plan to acquire productive agricultural land through condemnation proceedings, but only if an amicable settlement cannot be reached first. ALCAB must consider compliance with the Agricultural Land Preservation Policy (ALPP) (4 PA Code 7.301 et seq.) before granting approval for condemnation of farmland.

ALPP requires agencies of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to adopt measures to mitigate and protect farmland from conversion according to the following five priorities:

1. Permanent agricultural conservation easements or deed restrictions
2. Agricultural security area
3. Farmland enrolled in preferential tax assessments (i.e., Clean and Green); which there are some present within the project area.
4. Agricultural protection zoning
5. Soils determined to be most suitable for agricultural use by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA).

All five farmland protection priorities are found within the project area. However, the team will work to develop alternatives that avoid impacts to farmlands to the extent possible. The team will reconfirm through interviews with all of the farmers the status of the property to ensure it is still being farmed and within any protection category the land may be associated farm property.

4.4 Section 4(f) Resources

US Department of Transportation Act of 1966 Section 4(f) (codified in 23 CFR 774) stipulates that the US Secretary of Transportation may approve a transportation project requiring the use of publicly owned land of a public park, recreation area, or wildlife and waterfowl refuge, or land from a historic site of national, state, or local significance (as determined by the federal, state, or local officials having jurisdiction over the park, recreation area, refuge, or site) only if:

- There is no prudent and feasible alternative to using that land; and
- The project includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the public park, recreation area, wildlife and waterfowl refuge, or historic site resulting from the use; or
- The use, including any measures to minimize harm (such as avoidance, minimization, mitigation, or enhancement measures), will have a de minimis impact on the property.

For parks, recreational areas, and wildlife and waterfowl refuges, the official(s) with jurisdiction is the official(s) of the agency owning or administering the land. For historic properties, the official with jurisdiction is the SHPO.

Coordination with officials with jurisdiction may be on-going through the Section 4(f) process and/or occur during documentation and approval. Section 4(f) documentation requirements are dictated by the type(s) of Section 4(f) use. PennDOT and FHWA Pennsylvania Division Office have developed forms to assist in the documentation of non-applicability/no use, temporary occupancy, de minimis use, and Section 4(f) use that meet the criteria of four nationwide programmatic Section 4(f) evaluations.

Officials with jurisdiction should be contacted to:

- Identify Section 4(f) resources (parks, historic sites, wildlife refuges)
- Confirm 'publicly-owned' status, if a recreational resource, and Section 4(f) use of a property
- Identify current and planned use of a Section 4(f) resource
- Determine which portion of the Section 4(f) resource is significant
- Determine the applicability of Section 4(f) to a resource
- Concur with a de minimis finding by FHWA after notification
- Determine the use of a Section 4(f) resource (e.g., actual use, constructive use, temporary occupancy)

There are no known wildlife or waterfowl refuges located within the project area. There are several parks one of which may have a potential use. Anticipated Section 4(f) uses would also include historic sites, specifically the Penns Valley/Brush Valley Rural Historic District. The historic sites will be identified during the detailed study phase, and the team will attempt to avoid the use of these properties to the extent possible.

5 NOTICE OF INTENT

The EIS process begins with the publication of a Notice of Intent (NOI), stating the intent to prepare an EIS for a particular proposal. The NOI is published in the federal register by the lead federal agency and provides basic information on the proposed action in preparation for the scoping process. The NOI notifies all agencies, tribes, and individuals about the proposed action and identifies the issues that should be analyzed.

Additional project information is also included with the NOI and includes a brief description of the proposed action and possible alternatives. It also describes the agency's proposed scoping process, including meetings and how the public can get involved. The NOI will also contain an agency point of contact who can answer questions about the proposed action and the NEPA process. An NOI to prepare an EIS for the State College Area Connector project is anticipated to be published in the federal register in mid-2024.

**APPENDIX C – COORDINATION PLAN FOR PUBLIC
INVOLVEMENT**

Public Involvement Coordination Plan for the State College Area Connector Project



July 2024
Project Identification #: 112784

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Coordination Plan

The purpose of the *State College Area Connector Project Agency Coordination Plan* (Coordination Plan) is to define the process for meeting the agency requirements in the environmental review process, including the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and related laws. The purpose of the coordination plan is to facilitate, and document structured and meaningful interaction with the federal and state resource agencies, and to inform the agencies of how coordination will be accomplished, and feedback will be received.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) requires that not later than 90 days after the date of publication of a notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) the lead agency shall "establish a plan for coordinating public and agency participation in and comment on the environmental review process for a project."

Per the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) Publication 10B (Design Manual Part 1B: Post-TIP NEPA Procedures, April 2022 edition), the coordination plan must be shared with the public and with participating agencies so that they know what to expect and so that any disputes are surfaced as early as possible.

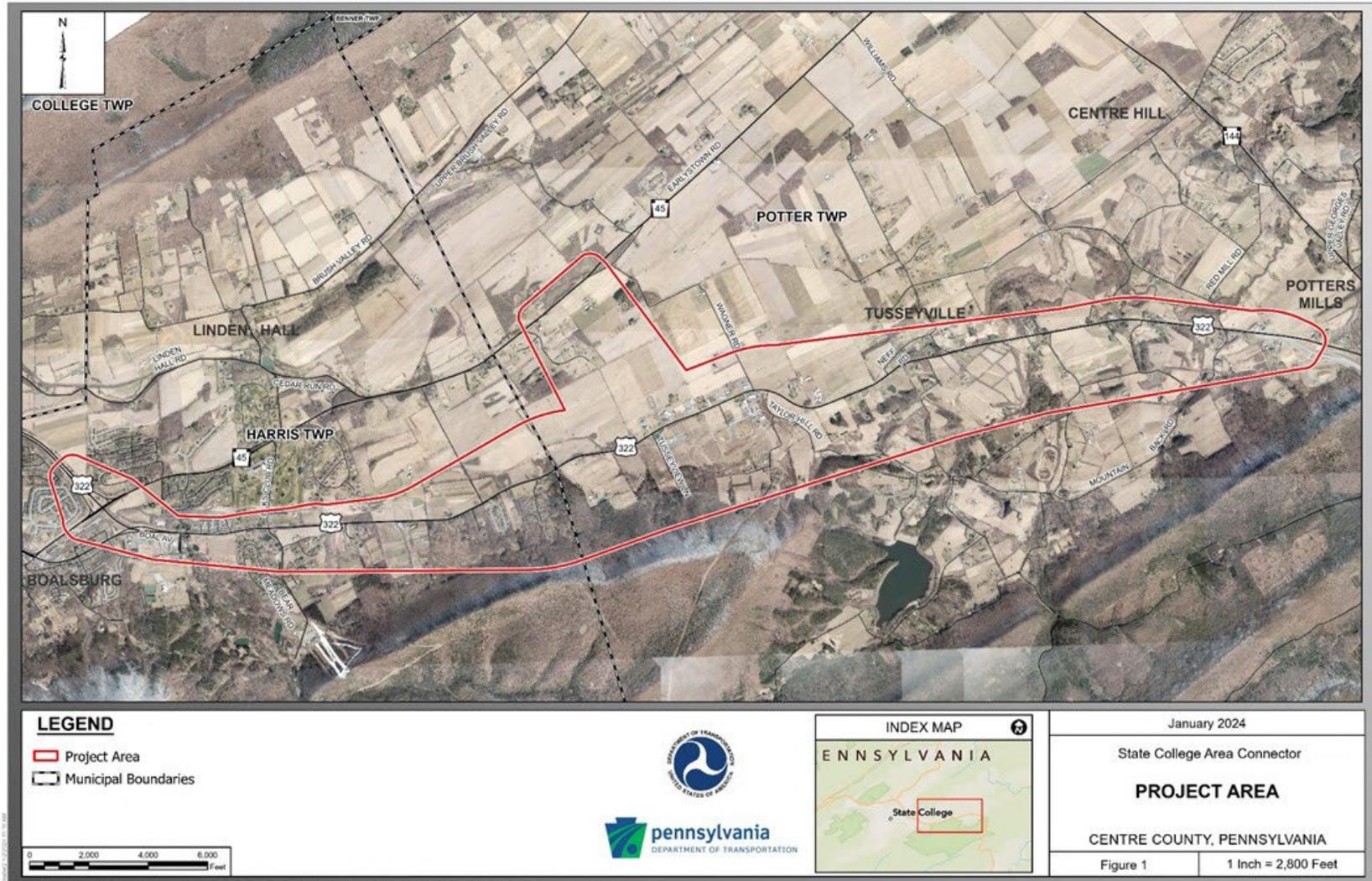
1.2 Project Description

PennDOT, in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), is initiating NEPA activities as part of an EIS for an 8-mile 4-lane limited-access facility from the end of US 322/Mount Nittany Expressway in Boalsburg to the newly constructed limited access portion of US 322 at Potters Mills in Centre County, Pennsylvania. The intent of this project is to build upon the State College Area Connector Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) document that evaluated a range of alternatives, and through a quantitative and qualitative screening process identified three Build Alternative corridor options for further study in NEPA and established the NEPA project area (**Figure 1**).

Subsequent to the PEL completion, additional traffic investigations and analysis and coordination with local officials for the State College Area Connector project determined that the connector road and interior interchange (included in each of the PEL US 322 Build Alternatives) would provide some localized improvements to PA 45. However, it was determined that the connector road and associated interchange was not necessary to address the project's purpose and need, nor did it address corridor wide issues along PA 45. As a result, the proposed interior interchange and local road connection was removed from this State College Area Connector project and will be considered in the independent PA 45 Corridor Improvements project, as appropriate. The State College Area Connector project will advance independently but will not preclude the inclusion of a future interior interchange and local road connection should the independent safety study along PA 45 determine that it would be beneficial in connection with other proposed PA 45 Corridor Improvements projects. **Figure 2** provides the revised project area for the State College Area Connector project that will move forward for alternative development and investigation.

state college area
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1.3 Purpose and Need

1.3.1 Project Purpose

The purpose of this project is to improve roadway congestion by achieving acceptable LOS and to address safety issues by reducing the predicted crash frequency along the US 322 corridor between Potters Mills and Boalsburg. Additionally, the project will aim to provide a transportation network that meets driver expectations.

1.3.2 Project Need

Within the project area, there are transportation issues associated with high levels of congestion, potential safety issues along the roadway network, and a roadway network which presents a driver with irregular travel patterns and unexpected driving conditions. The following provides a summary of the needs statements and supporting documentation.

High peak hour traffic volumes cause congestion and result in unacceptable Level of Service (LOS) (LOS D [rural only], E, or F) on US 322 roadways and intersections.

- US 322 serves as the main travel route for local, regional, and interstate traffic, including trucks, within the project area. Currently during peak hours, US 322, between the US 322 Mount Nittany Expressway and the Mountain Back Road/Red Mill Road intersection (just west of Potters Mills), operates at a LOS D or E. The 2050 peak hour traffic volumes are anticipated to increase 41% which will increase congestion and worsen the LOS along the US 322 corridor. In 2050, LOS E is still anticipated for the entire US 322 corridor from the Mount Nittany Expressway to Potters Mills Gap, and travel speed will be further decreased with an average travel speed 15% less than the posted speed limit.
- Unsignalized intersections along US 322 are anticipated to operate at unacceptable LOS (LOS D, E, or F) due to high volumes of traffic along the uncontrolled main roadway which limit the availability of gaps in the traffic for making turning movements.
- US 322 averages three times more truck traffic within the project area in comparison to other similar roadways statewide, and truck traffic is expected to increase by 27% along the corridor by 2050. The additional truck traffic increases overall congestion and contributes to unacceptable levels of service.

Existing roadway configurations and traffic conditions contribute to safety concerns in the project area.

- Crashes were identified along a majority of the US 322 corridor with some concentrations at unsignalized intersections (e.g., Elks Club Road/Bear Meadows Road, Neff Road, and Red Mill Road/Mountain Back Road). Additionally, between 2017 and 2021, nearly 19% of all crashes along US 322 were caused by a heavy vehicle.

- The Highway Safety Manual (HSM) analysis results indicate the potential for safety improvements along a majority of the US 322 corridor and at unsignalized intersections through the project area. Increasing traffic along US 322 has reduced the number of gaps available for side street and driveway traffic attempting to enter or exit US 322. This causes drivers to make turning movements outside of their comfort zone which contributes to crashes at side streets and driveway intersections. Additionally, the large percentage of through traffic exacerbates the issue as these drivers may be unfamiliar with the roadway characteristics.

The roadway network and configuration in the project area lacks continuity and does not meet driver expectations.

- US 322 is on the National Highway System and is classified as a principal arterial that is intended to provide long-distance connections. US 322, adjacent to the project area (near both Potters Mills and Boalsburg), is a four-lane, limited-access, divided highway facility with exit and entrance ramps to provide access to the local roadway network. This type of roadway is conducive to higher travel speeds and supports regional and interstate travel patterns. These adjacent sections of US 322 feed traffic into the project area, where US 322 is currently a two-lane, non-divided highway with unrestricted access to driveways and intersecting roadways. The abrupt change in roadway configuration and characteristics creates a roadway network that lacks continuity of facility type and function.
- Within the project area, US 322 serves local, regional, and interstate traffic (including truck and commuter traffic). The road also services other travel modes including farm equipment traffic and bicycle traffic. The change in the roadway cross-section at both ends of the corridor creates inconsistencies which may not meet driver expectations, particularly for regional and interstate traffic. The potential for additional uncontrolled access points along US 322 would continue to degrade roadway continuity along the corridor and create additional locations for conflicts that could result in crashes.

1.3.3 Project History

Within the State College Area Connector project area, there have been many transportation improvement studies and projects that have influenced travel within and immediately adjacent to the project area dating back to the 1970s. However, in the 1990s, key regional studies occurred which greatly influenced travel and development within the project area. The following provides a high-level summary of the local and regional transportation projects which have provided influence on the State College Area Connector project area.

Interstate 80

- I-80 was completed in Pennsylvania in 1970.
- I-80 through Pennsylvania influenced traffic patterns, particularly an increase in interstate truck traffic. This increase in traffic affected travel conditions within the project area.

- Roadway safety and quality of life in Centre County communities traversed by these roadways were influenced by the I-80 completion.

Interstate 99

- US 220 study west of the State College area led to the development of a major improvement project for a new north-south interstate through Centre County that culminated with the construction of I-99 extending from Blair County to US 322 (the Mount Nittany Expressway).
- PA 26 corridor study resulted in the construction of I-99 from US 322 (the Mount Nittany Expressway) north towards I-80.
- I-80 Exit 161 (Bellefonte Interchange) is under development to replace the existing interchange with a new high-speed interchange and complete the I-99/I-80 connection. Construction of the interchange improvements will complete the goal for a major north-south interstate (I-99) through the center of the Commonwealth connecting two major east-west interstates, the Pennsylvania Turnpike (I-76) and I-80.

South Central Centre County Transportation Study (SCCCTS)

- SCCCTS was initiated in 1998 to evaluate and address transportation needs along the US 322, PA 144, and PA 45 corridors. The SCCCTS project needs identified specific transportation problems in each of the three corridors and on the local road system, as well as needs associated with regional travel patterns. The regional travel pattern need statement addressed the high percentage of through trips (in particular the high volume of truck traffic), high crash rates (including fatalities), poor Level of Service (LOS) including LOS associated with heavy truck traffic and increases in travel demand associated with local and regional planned development. However, SCCCTS was terminated in 2004 due to funding shortfalls and the NOI rescinded on July 29, 2019.

Safety Improvements

- Following the termination of SCCCTS in 2004, short-term safety improvements along the US 322 corridor were conducted between 2006 and 2015. These improvements included general intersection improvements (e.g., turn lanes), safety improvements (e.g., safety dot warning pavement markings, removal of passing zones), minor roadway realignments, and bridge reconstruction. These improvements were initiated to address some of the safety concerns identified during the SCCCTS study.

Potters Mills Gap (PMG) Transportation Project

- PennDOT and FHWA initiated the PMG Transportation Project to improve a 3.75-mile-long section of US 322 in Potter Township within the area locally known as “Potters Mills Gap”. This project area encompassed the southeastern portion of the SCCCTS study area. It was determined that this project had independent utility and addressed a defined purpose and need. The project included the construction of a new limited access four-lane roadway section that started at the Sand Mountain Road intersection and extended west, tying back into existing US 322 with a new interchange and roundabout, west of the PA 144/US 322 intersection.

SCCCTS Data Refresh

- In 2018, PennDOT collected data to update the traffic and environmental information from the former SCCCTS (2004), to identify changes to travel patterns, the transportation network, and environmental conditions. This information supported the 2019 decision by state officials to restart efforts to address regional transportation needs in the US 322, PA 44, and PA 45 area. Nearly, \$15 million in state funding was allocated to advance the State College Area Connector Study.

State College Area Connector Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study

- In 2020, PennDOT, in cooperation with FHWA and coordination with the Centre County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), initiated the State College Area Connector PEL Study. The PEL process promoted early coordination with the public as well as federal, state, and local agencies in a transparent and collaborative environment that identified and evaluated transportation needs in the area and developed and evaluated alternatives while considering community concerns in transportation decision-making early in the planning process. The PEL study identified a range of alternatives and screened them against the purpose and need and potential for environmental effects. Three Build Alternatives corridors were recommended for further study. These three recommended Build Alternatives and a refined study area are being advanced for NEPA study with a Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS.

1.4 Project Public Outreach History

During the State College Area Connector PEL Study a robust outreach plan was developed and implemented that included stakeholder meetings, a public pop-up event, public and public official meetings, electronic notifications to interested citizens, and a study website. This coordination effort and level will be continued throughout the NEPA/EIS phase of the project.

1.4.1 Public Meetings

Four public meetings, virtual and in-person, were held during the PEL Study:

Virtual Public Meeting – October 2020

Due to COVID-19, the October 2020 public meeting was held virtually. The meeting was hosted on the study website (www.PennDOT.gov/SCAC), and presented an overview of the transportation development process, the SCAC PEL process, study area environmental resources, engineering and traffic data, and purpose and needs. Seventy-eight attendees signed in at the meeting and 358 different website IP addresses logged into the meeting materials.

Open House Public Meeting - September 2021

The September 2021 public meetings were held at the Wyndham Garden Inn State College in Boalsburg on September 21 and 22. The meetings introduced the PEL Study process; presented the range of alternative concepts, alternative screening process, and

preliminary environmental and traffic analysis; and solicited public feedback. These meetings had 859 registered attendees.

Open House Public Meeting – April 2022

The April 2022 public meetings were held at the Calvary Church in Boalsburg, Pennsylvania on April 5 and Centre Hall Fire Station in Centre Hall on April 6. The meetings provided an update on the PEL Study environmental data collection efforts, traffic analyses, Upgrade Existing and Build Alternative corridor refinements, and solicited public feedback. A video was shown at the meeting that provided a summary of key study changes since the September 2021 meetings. These meetings had 859 registered attendees.

Open House Public Meeting – October 2022

The October 2022 public meetings were held on October 19 and October 20 at the Mount Nittany Middle School in State College, Pennsylvania. The meetings provided an open house where the study boards were available along with staff to answer individual questions. A presentation that provided an overview of the PEL Study and the draft recommendations for alternatives to move forward into the NEPA process was given by project staff. Following the presentation, the public was afforded an opportunity to ask specific questions of the study team. The same information and format were presented and utilized at both meetings. These meetings had 502 registered attendees.

1.4.2 Public Official Meetings

Three public official meetings were held to offer the opportunity to learn about the PEL Study and discuss study results in advance of scheduled public meetings.

- Public official meeting was held on August 31, 2021
- Public official meeting was held on March 30, 2022
- Public official meeting was held on September 7, 2022

Additional workshops were held throughout the PEL Study to keep the local officials informed or to request input. **Table 1** provides an overview of when outreach was conducted during the PEL Study and Pre-NEPA process. Additionally, the State College Area Connector Study had a standing agenda line item at the Centre County MPO Coordinating and Technical Committees since September 2020.

Table 1: Local Official Workshop Summary

Date	Entity
August 10, 2020	Harris Township Board of Supervisors
August 13, 2020	Centre Hall Borough Council
August 17, 2020	Potter Township Board of Supervisors
August 20, 2020	College Township Council
September 3, 2020	Benner Township Council
September 8, 2020	Spring Township Supervisors
November 24, 2020	Centre County Commissioners
May 10, 2021	Harris Township Board of Supervisors
May 13, 2021	Centre Hall Borough Council
May 17, 2021	Potter Township Board of Supervisors
May 20, 2021	College Township Council
July 13, 2021	Potter Township Planning Commission
February 14, 2022	Harris Township/Potter Township/Spring Township Official Representatives
March 7, 2022	Harris Township/Potter Township Official Representatives
August 7, 2023	Potter Township Board of Supervisors
August 14, 2023	Harris Township Board of Supervisors
August 17, 2023	College Township Council
September 10, 2023	Centre Hall Borough Council
January 17, 2024	Harris Township, Potter Township, and Centre County Official Representatives

2 Stakeholder Identification, Outreach Tools and Strategies, and Public Notifications

In order to implement the Public Involvement Coordination Plan, key stakeholders need to be identified, a means of notifying the stakeholders and the public needs to be established, and various outreach strategies and tools identified. The following sections outline these various topics.

2.1 Tribal Outreach

PennDOT and FHWA, Pennsylvania Division, identified eight federally recognized tribes and nations that are likely to have an interest in Pennsylvania projects because of ancestral ties to the state. Therefore, FHWA, as part of the federal government, engages in government-to-government relations with the tribes and nations.

FHWA has delegated to PennDOT, with the consent of the eight tribes and nations, Section 106 consultation with the tribes and nations. PennDOT is responsible for initiating consultation with tribes and nations on a project-specific basis, transmitting documentation and information to the tribes and nations, and determining a tribe's or nation's level of interest

in a project. PennDOT has initiated consultation with the following tribes who have ancestral ties to this area:

- Absentee-Shawnee Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma
- Delaware Nation
- Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma
- Oneida Nation
- Seneca Nation of Indians
- Seneca-Cayuga Nation
- Shawnee Tribe
- Delaware Tribe of Indians

This initial consultation was completed by PennDOT District 2-0's Cultural Resource Professionals through Project Path. As of August 1, 2023, no tribes have requested to be consulting parties. Official consulting party letters have been sent to interested parties along with the eight tribes to confirm their interest.

The project team will work closely with PennDOT 2-0's Cultural Resource Professionals to ensure compliance with PennDOT's Publication 689, The Transportation Project Development Process: Cultural Resources Handbook.

The FHWA Pennsylvania's Division Administrator also invited these tribes to be official participating agencies in the State College Area Connector study and project. To date, only the Seneca Nation of Indians and the Delaware Tribe of Indians have accepted participating agency status.

2.2 Environmental Justice (EJ) populations and Plain Sect Communities

As part of the PEL Study, the State College Area Connector project team conducted an environmental justice investigation to assess the presence of environmental justice communities within the PEL study area. Demographic data was collected from the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) EJ Screen tool and the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year Estimates for all census block groups within the PEL study area. The analysis identified one Census Tract (CT) block group within the project area (CT 118 Block Group 3 15.2%) with a higher concentration of minority populations when compared to the County (12.4%). Coordination with local officials and field investigations identified one community within this CT block group which is likely home to minority populations. This community is adjacent to existing US 322 and was specifically avoided during development of the PEL alternatives. None of the CT block groups had concentrations of populations below poverty level greater than the County (18.2%) or the state (12.0%). As the alternatives are further engineered and refined, avoidance and minimization of effects to this community will be advanced to avoid a disproportionate and adverse effect to environmental justice populations. Continued coordination with local officials will be

conducted during the development of the EIS studies, and targeted public outreach will be conducted with this community.

The team will utilize several available tools to monitor changes in the presence of low-income and minority populations and will continue to coordinate with local leaders to fully understand the communities within the project area. The benefits and burdens of each alternative to any identified low-income and/or minority population will be evaluated. The project team will prepare a community assessment technical report to document the existing conditions, impact assessment and avoidance, minimization, and mitigation.

In addition to a potential environmental justice community, the project area is in proximity to a Plain Sect Community/Amish community. While no Amish farms are in or adjacent to proposed project alternatives, the Amish may use the roadway network within the project to traverse to other communities. To ensure they are aware of the project and have meaningful engagement opportunities, targeted outreach will be conducted by posting flyers in locations that are frequented by these communities and letter invitations with flyers will be sent to the three church district bishops that include and are adjacent to the project area.

The State College Area Connector Project will be evaluated in accordance with the following key regulations and guidance:

- Executive Order 14096, Executive Order on Revitalizing Our Nation's Commitment to Environmental Justice for All, 2023
- Executive Order 13985 Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government, 2021
- Executive Order 13166, Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Linguistic Minorities
- Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations
- US Department of Transportation's (DOT) Order 5610.2 (c) on Environmental Justice (May 2021)
- Council on Environmental Quality's Environmental Justice Guidance Under the National Environmental Policy Act (December 1997)
- Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice's Promising Practices for EJ Methodologies in NEPA Reviews (March 2016)

If disproportionate and adverse impacts on EJ populations result from any project alternatives, appropriate mitigation measures will be developed and documented in coordination with the affected communities, consistent with the requirements of environmental justice laws, regulations, and guidelines.

2.3 Stakeholders

The project team will utilize stakeholders within the project area to provide localized knowledge of the communities and environment. Meetings with stakeholders could be held at the stakeholder's request or to provide needed information for specific design activities.

These meetings would be intended to address a specific project issue or concern. These meetings will be documented and included in the public outreach technical file.

2.4 Project Website

A project-specific website that is associated with PennDOT's main website is provided at www.PennDOT.pa.gov/SCAC. The website will be updated with specific project information at major milestones. The website content may include, but not be limited to the following:

- Project fact sheets, updates, and other public information materials including public meeting dates
- Project photos or videos
- Meeting announcements
- Media releases
- Visualization (e.g., renderings, drawings, maps, photos, videos) to provide visual examples of projects or concepts)
- Project technical reports, as appropriate
- Project milestones and schedule
- Contact information (email address, and the PennDOT Engineering District 2-0 office address)
- Online form(s) to gather contact information and feedback
- Important website links

All feedback and any associated responses provided via the website will be recorded and included in the stakeholder tracking log and included in technical reports and the project record, as appropriate.

2.5 General Meeting Notification Process

Notifications for all public meetings and hearings will include, but not be limited to:

- Newspaper advertisements
- Direct mail invitations
- Electronic invitations
- Electronic and social media
- Targeted media relations
- Flyer postings at local businesses and other establishments

Public meeting notifications, materials and exhibits will be presented in English. However, if attendees need communication accommodations, or an interpreter, or have a disability and need assistance, all advertising will include contact information for PennDOT's District 2-0 Public Information Office who will make appropriate arrangements to accommodate most needs.

2.6 Stakeholder Database

A master stakeholder database, which was started during the PEL Study, will be used to disseminate electronic information concerning the State College Area Connector Project, including public meeting announcements. The stakeholder database will include anyone that has expressed an interest in the project including elected officials, agency officials, residents, businesses, neighborhood groups, and professional membership organizations. The project team will grow the database by offering meeting and event attendees the option to sign up for updates. Visitors to the website will also have the opportunity to sign up for email updates.

2.7 Media

PennDOT will promote the widespread dissemination of information by engaging reporters and soliciting media coverage, distributing news releases, and coordinating special events. The State College Area Connector project team will coordinate outreach with PennDOT's Press Office prior to any outreach.

2.8 Social Media

PennDOT will use their existing PennDOT X and Facebook® social media accounts to publicize project information. This will allow members of the public who follow the PennDOT X and Facebook® social media accounts to post their comments in these social media platforms. The State College Area Connector project team will engage PennDOT's Press Office prior to any outreach. The project team will partner with local municipalities to post information to their social media accounts.

2.9 Demographic Data

PennDOT will ask meeting participants and survey-takers to voluntarily provide demographic data, including age, race/ethnicity, zip code, etc. This the collected information will be compared with overall demographics to ensure a broad cross-section of people are participating.

2.10 Project Document Repositories

PennDOT will ask municipal offices and libraries within the vicinity of the project area to serve as repositories for project documents, including EIS documents for those who may not have internet access. The repositories will enable members of the public to examine project documents, independent of computer or internet access. Any interactive survey materials will also be printed and made available at the repository locations so community members can complete the paper surveys.

3 Public Involvement Coordination Plan

The State College Area Connector Project Coordination Plan for Public Involvement is prepared in cooperation with FHWA and PennDOT. The plan follows PennDOT's Publication 295, Project Level Public Involvement Handbook and expands upon the public involvement

activities conducted during the PEL Study (Outlined in the project history section of this document).

The information in this section will be shared with the public and addresses the anticipated methods of public involvement. The plan provides for public input during the project development process, including refining the purpose and needs and the alternatives analysis. The plan will be posted on the project website – (www.PennDOT.pa.gov/SCAC).

State College Area Connector Project public involvement objectives mirror those of PennDOT's Publication 295. Informative, timely, concise, and responsive communication is essential for building trust and relationships among the community's numerous and varied stakeholders.

Key Objectives:

- Hold an open dialogue with interested citizens
- Allow the public to help develop solutions for their community
- Assess the public's reaction to the proposed project
- Integrate public views and preferences into decision-making and document their consideration
- Provide a meaningful way to gain input into understanding what is important to the community
- Avoid, minimize, and mitigate for environmental consequences, and disclose the environmental consequences and potential mitigation of a proposed action
- Ensure targeted and thoughtful coordination and outreach with environmental justice communities.

3.1 Inclusion of Project in Regional, State and Local Plans

The State College Area Connector or major transportation improvements to arterial roadways are included in regional, state, and local plans, providing the public with an opportunity to comment on the project, including the following:

- Centre County Long Range Transportation Plan 2050 (September 2020)
- Centre County Comprehensive Plan Phase I (2003) and Phase II Implementation Strategies (2016 to 2020)
- Centre Region Comprehensive Plan (November 2013)
- 2023-2026 Centre County Transportation Improvement Program
- 2023 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program.
- 2021 Pennsylvania 12-Year Program (August 2020)
- Centre County Unified Planning Work Program (November 2021)
- Penns Valley Regional Comprehensive Plan, adopted on January 30, 2006

3.2 Public Scoping Meetings

PennDOT will host scoping meetings for the public and agencies. Scoping is an open process involving the public and other federal, state, and local agencies to identify the significant

issues for consideration during the development of an EIS. PennDOT anticipates hosting two in-person public scoping meetings.

3.2.1 Public Scoping Meeting #1

Public scoping meeting #1 will occur after the NOI is issued and will present detailed traffic analysis, updated environmental features and preliminary engineering alignment alternatives. Public scoping meeting #1 will be held in-person and will include a virtual meeting component via the project website. Public notifications of this meeting will be conducted as outlined in Section 2 of this document. This meeting is anticipated to be held in August 2024.

3.2.1 Public Scoping Meeting #2

Public scoping meeting #2 will be held following alternative refinement and identification of a draft recommended preferred alternative. This public scoping meeting will also present the associated potential environmental effects and conceptual mitigation. Public scoping meeting #2 will be held in-person and will include a virtual meeting component via the project website. Public notifications of this meeting will be conducted as outlined in Section 2 of this document. This meeting is anticipated to be held in early 2025 to confirm the alternative alignments to be studied in the Draft EIS (DEIS).

3.3 Notice of Availability of the DEIS – Public Hearing

Following the issuance of the Notice of Availability of the DEIS, a public hearing event will be held to present the results of the preliminary engineering and environmental analysis and present the recommended preferred alternative. The public hearing event may extend over multiple days, if appropriate. The DEIS will have a 45-day comment period, and the public hearing will occur 15-30 days after the DEIS is available for public and agency review. It is anticipated that the public hearing will occur in August 2025. The public hearing will follow PennDOT's *Project Level Public Involvement Handbook*. The public hearing will be advertised in the newspaper at least two weeks before the hearing. There will be an opportunity for both written and oral comments.

Attendees will have a chance to provide oral comments either publicly or privately. Stenographers will record the oral testimony provided. The project team will ensure all hearing materials can be viewed virtually along with instructions on how to provide written comments.

3.4 Elected Officials & Community Leader Briefings and Workshops

PennDOT will coordinate meetings with elected officials to provide program and project information and answer questions. The elected officials may review project information to understand how it potentially affects their constituents. The project team intends to meet with elected officials before each public meeting and public hearing. These meetings will allow the public officials to learn about the project and, in turn, present questions their constituents may have. In addition, the project team anticipates conducting periodic workshops with local

officials to discuss potential design treatments and obtain local input on the project design as it advances.

3.5 Noise Workshops

PennDOT will host noise workshops, if warranted. The FHWA's regulation on highway traffic noise requires a noise study when building new highways or changing or expanding existing ones. Noise abatement measures that are feasible and prudent will be considered based on the findings of the study. Workshops would allow owners of adjacent properties to learn about the study and vote on any proposed adjacent noise abatement measures.

3.6 Section 404 Permit Public Comment

This project is planning to utilize a merged NEPA/Section 404 process in which the FHWA and PennDOT's NEPA environmental document serves as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineer's (USACE) NEPA decision-making document and the Section 404 permit application. Therefore, the public hearing requirements for both NEPA and Section 404 would be covered with a joint public hearing event (as outlined above) at which the public has the opportunity to provide comments to the USACE on the Section 404 permit application in addition to the NEPA document.

4 NOTICE OF INTENT

The EIS process begins with the publication of a Notice of Intent (NOI), stating the intent to prepare an EIS for a particular proposal. The NOI is published in the federal register by the lead federal agency and provides basic information on the proposed action in preparation for the scoping process. The NOI notifies agencies, tribes, and individuals about the proposed action and identifies the issues that should be analyzed.

Additional supplementary information is also included with the NOI and includes a brief description of the proposed action and possible alternatives. It also describes the agency's proposed scoping process, including meetings and how the public can get involved. The NOI will also contain an agency point of contact who can answer questions about the proposed action and the NEPA process. An NOI to prepare an EIS for the State College Area Connector project is anticipated to be published in the federal register in July 2024.