

**Environmental Impacts Summary
Technical Memorandum
for the
State College Area Connector**

November 2025



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List of Acronyms

APR	Acid Producing Rock
CWA	Clean Water Act
DCNR	Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
LOS	Level of Service
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
PEL	Planning and Environmental Linkages
SCMs	Stormwater Control Measures
USACOE	U.S. Army Corp of Engineers
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Project History

The State College Area Connector Planning and Environmental Linkages (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 corridors to determine the best options to advance for National Environmental Policy Act (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.

The final PEL Report was published in June 2023 and Federal Highway Administration (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 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 the other proposed PA 45 Corridor Improvements project.

Following the PEL Study, the project area was reduced from 70 square miles to approximately 6 square miles to encompass the three alternatives proposed to move forward into preliminary engineering (see Figure 1 – Project Location Map in Appendix A).

1.2 Project Location

The project area is approximately 3,963 acres, extends through the southern portion of Centre County, and traverses Potter and Harris Townships. 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 Project Purpose and Need

Project Purpose

The purpose of this project is to improve roadway congestion by achieving acceptable Levels of Service (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.

Project Needs

- High peak hour traffic volumes cause congestion and result in unacceptable Levels of Service (LOS) (LOS D [rural only], E, 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.

2.0 Alternatives

The three corridors recommended from the PEL were refined and renamed North, Central and South Alternatives and presented to the public in August 2024 and to the state and federal resource agencies at the October 2023 field view. Additional refinements were made to each alternative based on public and agency feedback including developing an eastern end alignment that is the same for all three alternatives, areas for stormwater control measures (SCMs), private property access, bridges over streams and wetlands, and bridges for local roads and access driveways. The location of each alternative is described as follows.

2.1 North Alternative

The western end alignment would be the same for all three alternatives, from the SR 45 interchange to just east of the Mountain View Country Club Golf Course. At the western end, the existing US 322 would remain in its current location and the new US 322 4-lane highway would be located on the south side of the existing US 322. The western end alignment would also include a pedestrian/bicycle trail on the north side of the existing US 322 from Boal Avenue to Bear Meadows Road. Just east of the Mountain View Country Club Golf Course, the alignment would start to move north of the existing US 322 through the Nittany Farm and around the Kuhn tree farm. It would continue through the agricultural fields on the north side of US 322, avoiding the commercial area on local 322 in Potter Township. The alignment would return to the existing 322 corridor through Tusseyville. The eastern end would maintain the existing 322 corridor as the local 322 in its current position and the 4-lane highway alignment would be located on the south side of the existing 322 corridor from approximately Tusseyville to Potters Mills.

Bridges were added over Maggie's dip (Mountain Back/Red Mill Roads and a Sinking Creek tributary with wetland complex), ponds and a wetland complex near Cider Press Road, Sinking Creek, ponds, and wetlands in Tusseyville,

Spring Creek, Sharer Road, a wetland complex along Spring Creek on Nittany Farm, Somerset Drive, and Bear Meadows Road.

2.2 Central Alternative

The western end alignment would be the same for all three alternatives, from the SR 45 interchange to just east of the Mountain View Country Club. At the western end, the existing US 322 would remain in its current location and the new US 322 4-lane highway would be on the south side of the existing US 322. The western end alignment would also include a pedestrian/bicycle trail on the north side of the existing US 322. Just east of the Mountain View Country Club, the alignment would start to move north of the existing US 322 through the Nittany Farm and around the Kuhn tree farm. It would then cross over the existing US 322 and travel through the Potter Township Athletic Complex on the south side of US 322, avoiding the commercial area in Potter Township.

It is noted that at the time of the May 8, 2025 Public Meeting, the Central Alternative was located through the baseball fields within the Potter Township Athletic Complex. As part of the public involvement and follow-up from the public meeting, Potter Township issued a letter (June 23, 2025) to PennDOT raising concern with the proposed impact to the fields and requested PennDOT consider avoidance and minimization of the property. PennDOT shifted the Central Alternative to the south to avoid the baseball fields and will only impact the undeveloped portion of the Potter Township property.

From there, the alignment crosses Sleepy Creek (stream that drains to Tussey Sink) and starts to move north towards the existing US 322. The alignment would return to the existing US 322 alignment near Tusseyville. The eastern end would maintain the existing US 322 as the local access road in its current position and the 4-lane highway alignment would be on the south side of the existing US 322 from approximately Tusseyville to Potters Mills.

Bridges were added over Maggie's dip (Mountain Back/Red Mill Roads and a Sinking Creek tributary with wetland complex), ponds and a wetland complex near Cider Press Road, Sinking Creek, wetlands and access driveways near Tussey Meadow Lane, Tussey Sink and Taylor Hill Road, wetlands and Spring Creek tributaries near Tussey View Lane, Spring Creek, Sharer Road, a wetland complex along Spring Creek on Nittany Farm, Somerset Drive, and Bear Meadows Road.

2.3 South Alternative

The western end alignment would be the same for all three alternatives, from the SR 45 interchange to just east of the Mountain View Country Club Golf Course. At the western end, the existing 322 corridor would remain in its current location and the new US 322 4-lane highway would be located on the south side of the existing 322 corridor. The western end alignment would also include a pedestrian/bicycle trail on the north side of the existing US 322 from Boal Avenue to Bear Meadows Road. Just east of the Mountain View Country Club Golf Course, the alignment would start to move south of the existing 322 corridor through the Tait Farm and along the side of the Tussey Mountain ridge behind the neighborhoods and communities along the south side of the existing 322 corridor.

The preliminary engineering design of the South Alternative requires notable depths of cut ranging from 5 to 100 feet, as it traverses approximately 1.5 miles along the Tussey Mountain ridge. Although much of the project area is underlain

by karst / limestone geologic formations, the South Alternative cuts through the Reedsville and Bald Eagle Formations along the Tussey Mountain ridge.

It would then cross over Sleepy Creek (stream that drains to Tussey Sink) and start to move north towards the existing 322 corridor. The alignment would return to the existing 322 corridor near Tusseyville. The eastern end would maintain the existing 322 corridor as the local access road in its current position and the 4-lane highway alignment would be located on the south side of the existing 322 corridor from approximately Tusseyville to Potters Mills.

Bridges were added over Maggie's dip (Mountain Back/Red Mill Roads and a Sinking Creek tributary with wetland complex), ponds and a wetland complex near Cider Press Road, Sinking Creek, wetlands and access driveways near Tussey Meadow Lane, Tussey Sink and Taylor Hill Road, a pond and streams near Tussey View Lane, Coxey Lane, Tait Road, Somerset Drive, and Bear Meadows Road.

3.0 Environmental Effects (Impacts)

3.1 Regulatory Framework

The SCAC Project Area contains numerous environmental resources. The extent of the many resources, including farmlands, wetlands, watercourses, and forested land is further represented by their richness, diversity, and evenness across both the Sinking Creek and Spring Creek watersheds. The evaluation of potential impacts for the different project alternatives needs to consider those state and federal laws and regulatory programs that afford protections to specific resources. The key laws and regulations are described as follows.

- State and federal legislation protect agricultural resources from conversion by state and federal development projects when there is a reasonable and prudent alternative. Applicable farmland legislation includes PA Act 100 of 1979; PA Act 43 of 1981, Agricultural Area Security Law, as amended; 4 PA Code Chapter 7 § 7.301 et seq., ALPP; PA Act 515 of 1966, Covenant for Preservation; PA Act 319 of 1974, Farmland and Forest Land Assessment Act; 7 U.S.C. § 4201, FPPA of 1981, as amended. The condemnation via eminent domain taking of productive agricultural land in Pennsylvania requires approval by the Agricultural Land Condemnation Approval Board.
- Streams and wetlands are protected under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) and Chapter 105 of the PA Dams Safety and Waterway Management Act (PA Code Title 25, Chapter 105). These statutes require examination of practicable alternatives to avoid and minimize impacts and require issuance of a Section 404 Permit by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE) and the corresponding Section 401 Water Quality Certification (WQC)/Chapter 105 authorization from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP).
- Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) requires consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to seek ways to avoid jeopardizing the continued existence of federally threatened and endangered species and their habitats. In addition, there are similar requirements associated with applicable state codes, such as the Game and Wildlife Code, the Fish and Boat Code, and the Conservation of Natural Wild Plants Code for state threatened and endangered species. Section 7 does not require selection of the alternative that causes "least harm" to listed species, but its requirements are nonetheless stringent. Additionally, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act requires federal actions that have measurable negative impacts on migratory bird populations

to enter into memoranda of understanding with the USFWS to promote conservation of migratory bird populations.

- Section 4(f) of the U.S. DOT Act of 1966 affords protection to public parks, recreation areas, historic properties listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, and historic properties contributing to listed or eligible historic districts (regardless of individual eligibility).
- Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act provides protection to individually eligible historic resources and resources contributing to historic districts.

3.2 Environmental Effects per Alternative

A summary of environmental effects (impacts) per alternative is presented in Table 1. Higher effect values per resource topic (row) are colored red and the lower effect values per resource topic (row) are colored green. See Figure 2 in Appendix A for resources and alternatives.

Table 1. Alternative Effects to Environmental Resources

Feature		North	Central	South
Natural Resources	Agriculture			
	Productive Agricultural Land, Direct (acres)	142	116	104
	Productive Agricultural Land, Estimated Indirect (acres)	23	23	55
	Productive Agricultural Land, Total (acres)	165	139	159
	Farm Operations Impacted (#)	20	18	14
	Agricultural Conservation Easements (within productive agricultural land) (acres)	18	16	0
	Agricultural Security Areas (within productive agricultural land) (acres)	71	34	38
	Clean and Green (within productive agricultural land) (acres)	133	106	85
	Agricultural Zoning Districts (within productive agricultural land)	104	86	72
	Soil Capability Classes I-IV (within productive agricultural land) (acres)	137	114	103
Water Resources				

Feature		North		Central		South	
	Wetlands (within overall LOD) (acres)	25.4		30.0		17.9	
	Wetlands (within bridge footprint, presumably not impacted) (acres)	10.9		15.0		9.7	
	Wetlands (Indirect impacts due to loss of upstream flow) (acres)	-		-		3.7	
	Wetlands Total (acres)	14.5		15.0		11.9	
	Streams (within overall LOD) (# of crossings linear feet)	25	5,124	36	9,566	49	10,563
	Streams (within bridge footprint, presumably not impacted) (linear feet)	15	3,509	27	5,767	22	5,320
	Streams (Indirect impacts due to loss of upstream flow) (linear feet)	-	-	-	-	11	3,209
	Streams Total (linear feet)	1,615		3,799		8,452	
	100 Yr. Floodplains (acres)	14.2		14.7		12.6	
	Floodplains (within bridge footprint, presumably not impacted) (acres)	9.4		10.2		8.9	
	Floodplains Total (acres)	4.8		4.5		3.7	
	Floodways (acres)	9.2		21.6		21.9	
	Floodways (within bridge footprint, presumably not impacted) (acres)	4.5		11.6		8.0	
	Floodways Total (acres)	4.7		10.0		13.9	
	Terrestrial Habitat						
	Forested/Wooded Habitats (acres)	25		31		123	
	Stone Mountain Important Bird Area (acres)	0		0		2	
	Greater Tussey Mountain Important Bird Area (acres)	0		2		108	

Feature		North	Central	South
	Potential Bat Swarming Habitat (acres)	86	74	77
	Clearwater Conservation Easements (acres)	21	37	26
	Geologic Resources			
	Potential for Encountering Acid Producing Rock	Very Low	Low	High
	Potential for Encountering Sinkholes	High	Moderate	Low
Cultural Resources	Historic Resources			
	NRHP Individually Eligible Properties (#)	7	4	4
	Penns Valley/Brush Valley Rural Historic District Contributing Properties (# acres)	26 114.37	18 125.68	15 83.42
	Tusseyville Historic District Contributing Properties (also contribute to Penns Valley/Brush Valley RHD) (# acres)	7 5.73	0 0	0 0
	Archaeological Resources			
	Known Archaeological Sites (#)	4	5	5
	Historic Period Archaeological Sensitivity Area (acres)	20	21	23
	Statewide Prehistoric/Pre-Contact Model – High Probability Area (acres)	107	116	75
Socioeconomic Resources	Socioeconomic Resources			
	Residential Unit Displacements (#)	22	15	18
	Commercial Displacements (non-ag operations) (#)	3	2	2
	Visual/Aesthetic Impacts	High	High	High
	Places of Worship (#)	1	1	1

Feature		North		Central		South	
	Parks/Recreation Areas (# acres)	0	0	1	6	0	0
	HUD Subsidized Housing Units (#)	0		0		0	
	Potential Waste Sites (#) (in and adjacent to LOD)	36		33		28	
	Section 4(f) Resources Used (#)	7		5		4	

3.3 Observations of the Environmental Effects per Alternative

3.3.1 North Alternative

Advantages:

- Avoids headwaters of Spring Creek.
- Avoids Spring Creek Tributaries.
- Avoids the Stone Mountain and Greater Tussey Mountain Important Bird Areas.
- Minimizes impacts to protected bat species.
- Low potential for encountering acid producing rock.

Disadvantages:

- Highest Impact to productive agricultural land and farm operations.
- Most residential displacements of all three alternatives.
- Bisects the Tusseyville Community.
- Use of the most Section 106 historic properties of all three alternatives.
- Adverse Effect to the Tusseyville Historic District.
- Adverse Effect to the Penns Valley/Brush Valley Rural Historic District.

3.3.2 Central Alternative

Advantages:

- Avoids headwaters of Spring Creek.
- Avoids the Stone Mountain Important Bird Area and has very minor impacts to the Greater Tussey Mountain Important Bird Area.
- Minimizes impacts to protected bat species.
- Least residential displacements of all three alternatives.
- Least impact to productive agricultural land (when considering both direct and indirect impacts).
- Avoids an adverse effect to the Tusseyville Historic District.
- Lower number of Section 106 historic properties adversely affected.
- Low potential for encountering acid producing rock.

Disadvantages:

- Higher wetland impacts (compared to North and South)
- Adverse Effect to the Penns Valley/Brush Valley Rural Historic District.
- The number of stream impacts falls between the other two alternatives.

3.3.3 South Alternative

Advantages:

- Least wetland impacts of all three alternatives.
- Least direct impacts to productive agricultural land; however, high estimated indirect impacts.
- Avoids an adverse effect to the Tusseyville Historic District.
- Lower number of Section 106 historic properties adversely affected.

Disadvantages:

- Highest overall impacts to streams of all three alternatives.

- Highest impacts to the headwaters of Spring Creek.
- Highest impacts to the Greater Tussey Mountain Important Bird Area.
- Highest impacts to forest land.
- Highest impact to protected bat species due to the forest impacts and earthwork required.
- Adverse Effect to the Penns Valley/Brush Valley Rural Historic District.
- Requires nearly 1.5 miles of cut along the Tussey Mountain ridge with a depth ranging from 5 to 180 feet. Most of the cross sections show cuts on the upslope and downslope side of the alignment. The geologic formations in this area have the highest potential for encountering APR which would represent a water quality concern that could result in a reduction in the water quality to the Spring Creek watershed.
- Would result in changes to the natural drainage pattern; water management for the upslope hydrology would need to be collected off the cut face and conveyed underneath the alignment and daylighted through the downslope cut area. This would result in an increase in the impacts to downslope waters and wetlands.
- Intercepting the discharge and recharge area immediately upslope of many of the wetlands and waters is anticipated to indirectly affect wetlands and waters immediately downslope and within 200 feet of the alternative due to loss or reduction in hydrology.
- Intercepting the discharge and recharge area and altering the hydrologic condition of the hillside wetlands could result in a reduction in the effectiveness of the functions and values of these wetlands including groundwater recharge/discharge and wildlife habitat.
- The creation of the large cut slopes along the ridge has the potential to change the characteristics of the existing recharge/discharge area as it relates to water quality. The existing hillside is forested which provides shade cover for the existing headwater streams and wetlands. The extensive planned excavation would open a 1.5-mile section with open cut slopes. This would present the opportunity for increased solar exposure to the cut slopes and increase the potential for thermal impacts. Spring Creek is designated by the PFBC from its mouth upstream to its headwaters as a stream that supports a population of naturally reproducing trout, as well as a Class A Trout Stream. The addition of thermal influences to the numerous small headwater streams presents the potential for the reduction in the overall water quality of Spring Creek.
- The extent and depth of cuts along the ridge immediately upslope of the discharge of the headwater spring fed streams and wetlands represents a concern for the South Alternative. Significant hydrogeologic testing would be needed to further identify and model the groundwater recharge and discharge characteristics in this specific area in order to reduce and/or eliminate the potential concerns downstream from impacts to the headwaters of Spring Creek.
- The regulatory resource agencies, such as USACE, USFWS, and PA DEP, expressed concern because of the amount of forest loss; effects to headwater streams and wetlands downstream such as potential loss of flow and thermal impacts; and potential for APR. The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) also had concerns.

4.0 Summary

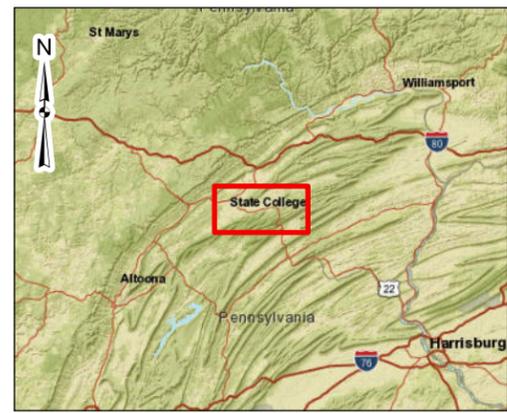
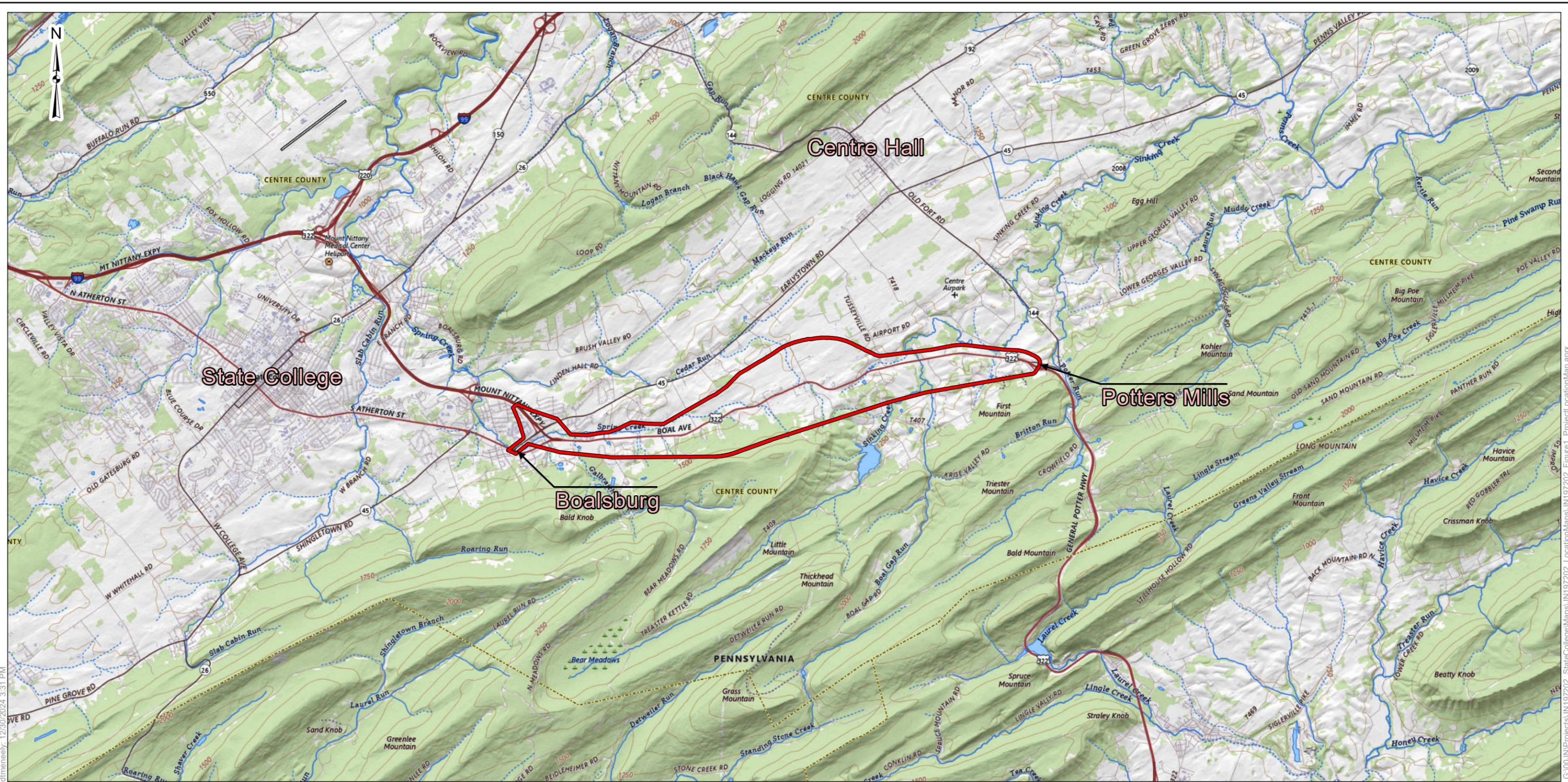
Through its many iterations and revisions, the Central Alternative was developed as a “best balance” between the North and South Alternatives. The Central Alternative would have the least number of potential residential displacements, less direct and indirect agricultural impacts than the North Alternative and less forest and aquatic resource impacts than the South Alternative. The Central Alternative is the only alternative that would affect the Potter Township Athletic Complex property, a Section 4(f) resource; however, the developed recreational features of the park will not be impacted. All three alternatives would require Section 404 and Chapter 105 permits for stream crossings and wetland impacts; however, the South Alternative would most likely require extensive hydrogeologic studies to gather a full understanding of the extent of indirect stream and wetland effects. All three alternatives would have an adverse effect under Section 106 to the Penns Valley/Brush Valley Rural Historic District and would require an Individual Section 4(f) Evaluation.

5.0 Preparers

Alyssa Lynd, Project Scientist, Skelly and Loy, Inc., A Terracon Company

Paul DeAngelo, Senior Principal, Skelly and Loy, Inc., A Terracon Company

APPENDIX A - FIGURES



Legend
 Project Location

DATA SOURCE(S):
 USGS Quadrangle - Centre Hall and State College, Pennsylvania 2023



Project No.: JN197202
 Date: December 2024
 Drawn By: DTM
 Reviewed By: BSR

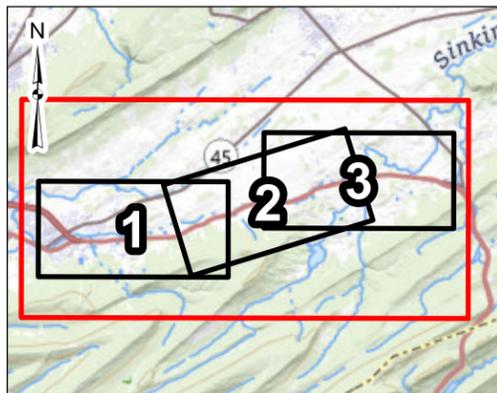
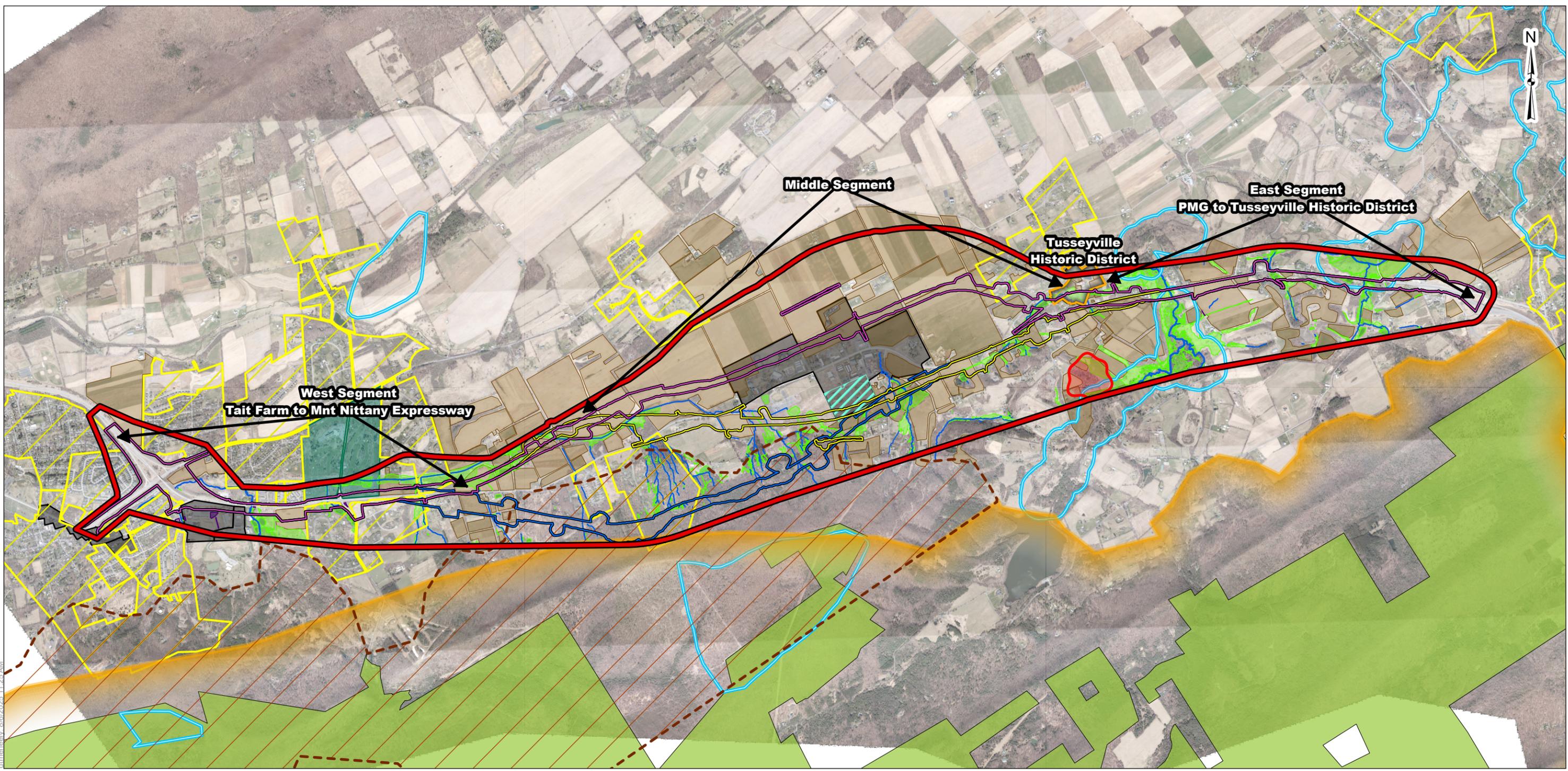
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Project Location Map
 State College Area Connector Project
 Centre County, Pennsylvania

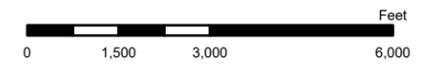
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Legend	
	Project Area
	North Alternative
	Central Alternative
	South Alternative
	Important Ecological Area
	Tusseyville Historic District
	Communities
	Parks
	Golf Course
	Watercourse
	Wetland
	Stormwater Wetland (SWWL)
	Greater Tussey Mountain Important Bird Area
	Rothrock State Forest (part) and Stone Mountain Important Bird Area
	Natural Heritage Area
	Productive Agriculture Land
	State Forest
	Commercial and Industrial Zoning



Project No.: JN197202
 Date: August 2025
 Drawn By: DTM
 Reviewed By: ALR

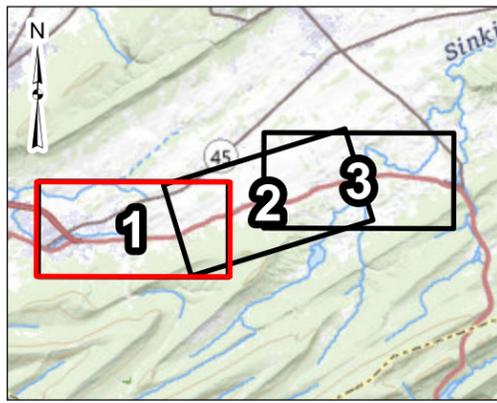
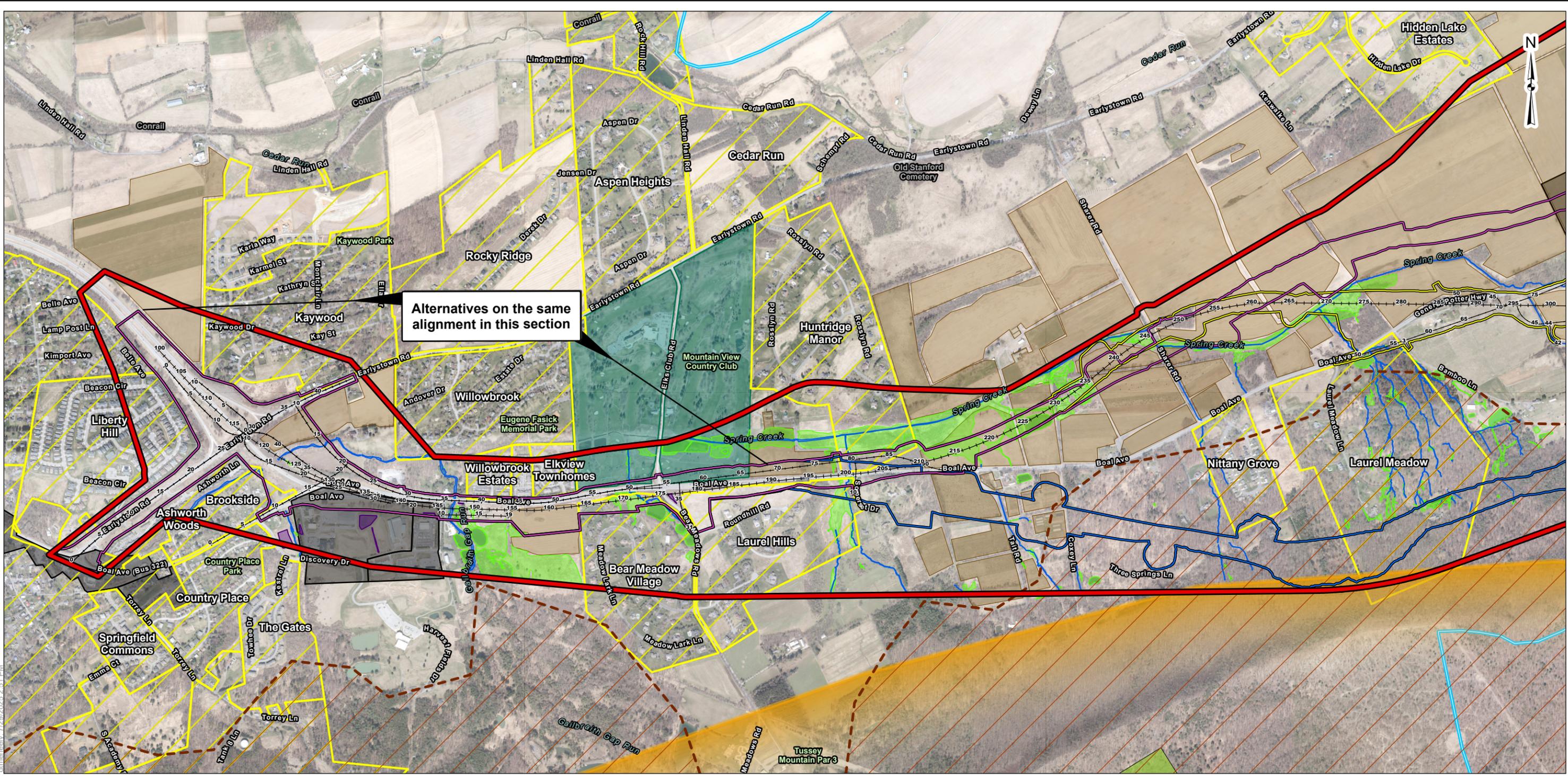
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Alternatives Analysis
 State College Area Connector Project
 Centre County, Pennsylvania

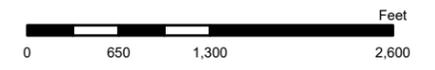
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Legend					
	Project Area		Communities		Natural Heritage Area
	North Alternative		Watercourse		Productive Agriculture Land
	Central Alternative		Wetland		State Forest
	South Alternative		Stormwater Wetland (SWWL)		Golf Course
	Central Roadway Design		Greater Tussey Mountain Important Bird Area		Commercial and Industrial Zoning
			Rothrock State Forest (part) and Stone Mountain Important Bird Area		



Project No.: JN197202
 Date: July 2025
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 Reviewed By: ALR

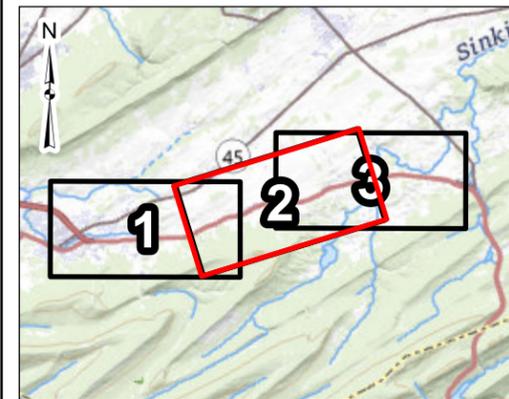
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Alternatives Analysis
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 Centre County, Pennsylvania

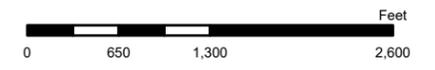
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Legend	
	Project Area
	North Alternative
	Central Alternative
	South Alternative
	Central Roadway Design
	Important Ecological Area
	Tusseyville Historic District
	Communities
	Watercourse
	Wetland
	Stormwater Wetland (SWWL)
	Greater Tussey Mountain Important Bird Area
	Rothrock State Forest (part) and Stone Mountain Important Bird Area
	Natural Heritage Area
	Parks
	Productive Agriculture Land
	State Forest
	Commercial and Industrial Zoning



Project No.: JN197202
 Date: July 2025
 Drawn By: DTM
 Reviewed By: ALR

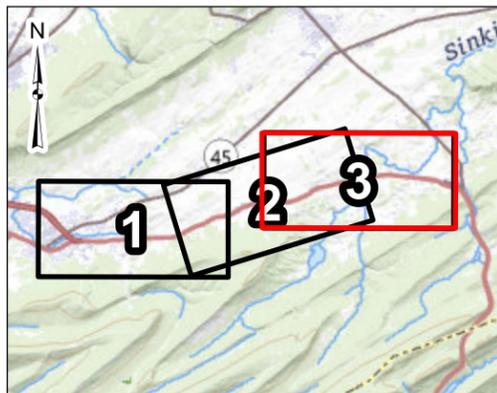
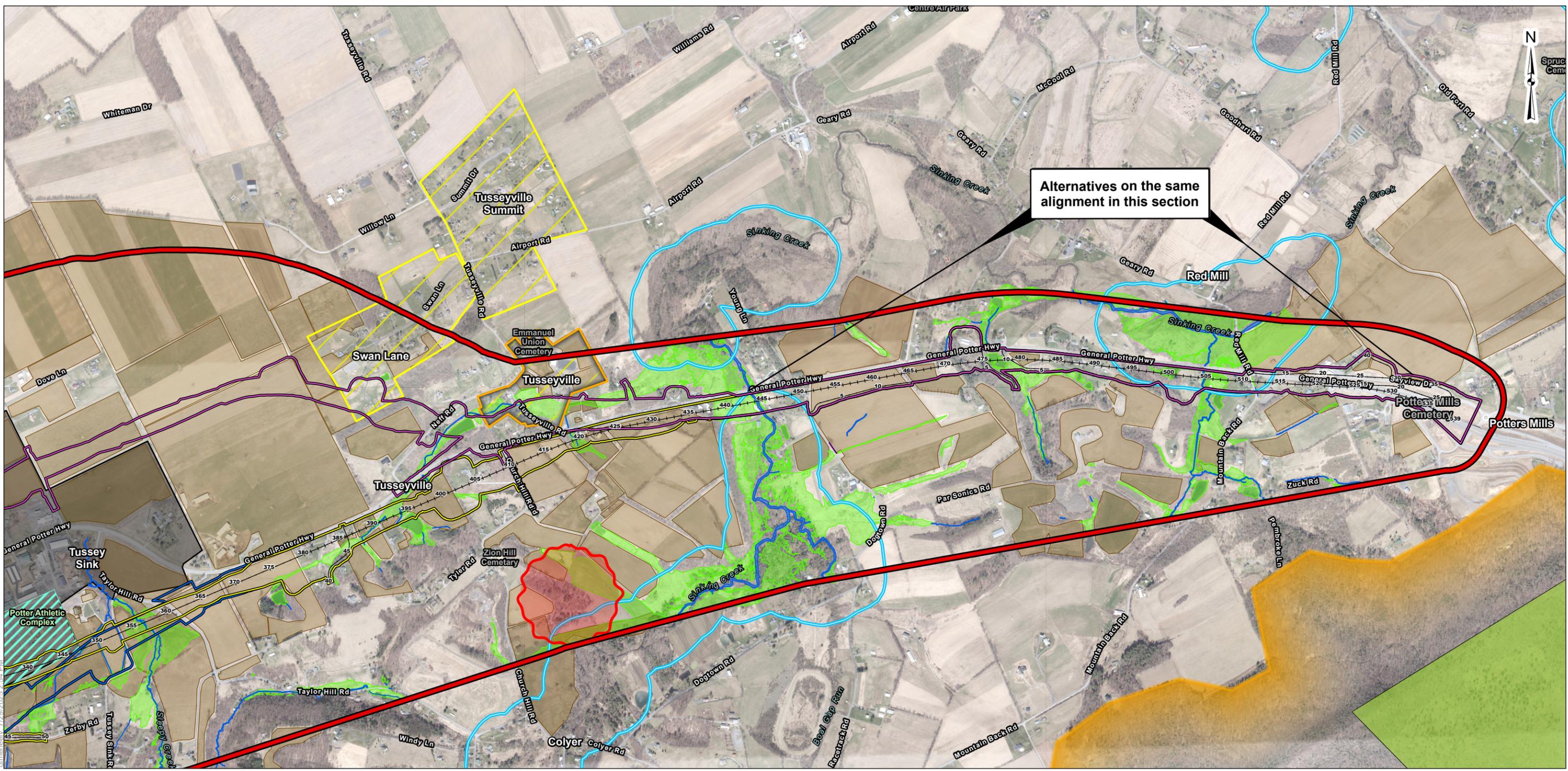
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Alternatives Analysis
 State College Area Connector Project
 Centre County, Pennsylvania

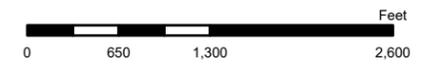
Figure 2
Sheet 2 of 3

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Legend					
	Project Area		Tusseyville Historic District		Natural Heritage Area
	North Alternative		Communities		Parks
	Central Alternative		Watercourse		Productive Agriculture Land
	South Alternative		Wetland		State Forest
	Central Roadway Design		Stormwater Wetland (SWWL)		Commercial and Industrial Zoning
	Important Ecological Area		Rothrock State Forest (part) and Stone Mountain Important Bird Area		



Project No.: JN197202
 Date: July 2025
 Drawn By: DTM
 Reviewed By: ALR

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Alternatives Analysis
 State College Area Connector Project
 Centre County, Pennsylvania

Figure 2
Sheet 3 of 3

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APPENDIX B – REFERENCES

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