

May 13, 2025

To: Ashwin Patel
From: Andrew Simpson
CC: Kelley Yemen
Subject: **Castor Avenue Fall 2024 Engagement Results**

The purpose of this memo is to summarize the results of the public engagement activities for Castor Avenue, completed between October 2024 and January 2025.

Summary of Results

The City's Office of Transportation and Infrastructure Systems (OTIS) led engagement efforts the Castor Avenue project to assist the PennDOT project team in delivering the Castor Avenue Safety and Beautification project.

OTIS, working with PennDOT, SEPTA, the Commerce Department, Philadelphia Planning Commission, and local elected officials, engaged over 125 community members in direct conversations and hundreds more through the online survey. We tried to ensure that everyone we spoke to completed the survey, either online or on paper (which we later added to the total results).

To capture feedback, the OTIS team led 4 different activities, each yielding strong feedback:

- Door-to-door engagement with businesses (30+ conversations and many more flyers left)
- Community meeting on 10/10/24 with 80 attendees
- Sit-down meeting with business association (15 attendees)
- Online survey with 571 total responses

We find that this engagement is not only sufficient to understand the diverse and varied needs of the corridor. We believe that the engagement was extremely robust at identifying the preferences of all members of the community, including those that are typically underrepresented:

- Approximately 370 students from Northeast High School completed the online survey.
- 10% of responses were in a language other than English, a strong result for a survey.

Overall, this engagement effort found that the Castor Avenue project broadly corresponds to the stated preferences of the community. While many community members are very concerned with the impacts of the road diet, the vast majority fully support the entire project. Even among those with concerns about traffic, the broad opinion on the project is positive.

We recommend developing clear answers to the primary concern for the project – traffic impacts – and continuing to work with community members to refine the design and complete this project.

Details of Engagement Activities

Online Survey

Who Took the Survey:

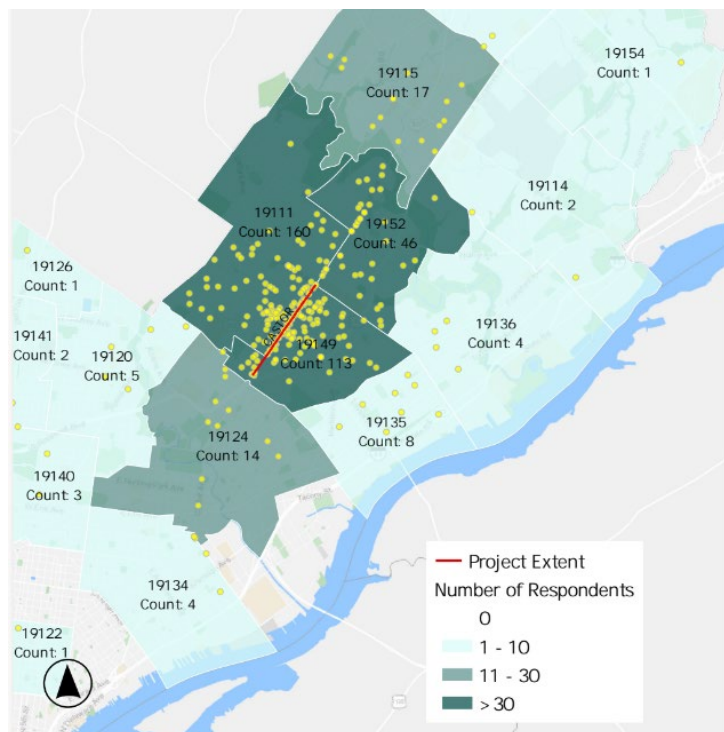
There were 571 total responses to the survey, administered both online and in person. Of these responses, the following information is relevant (note that totals don't match because of overlap in categories):

- 370 from Northeast High School students
- 512 total online responses in English
 - o 64 responses from the in-person community meeting
- 59 responses in languages other than English:
 - o 31 responses in Arabic
 - o 5 responses in Spanish
 - o 2 responses in Portuguese
 - o 21 responses in Chinese

Respondents were asked to provide their block number (e.g. 6400 Castor) to track where responses were generated. The vast majority of respondents are from the neighborhood around Castor Avenue (some business owners live further away and either answered with their business address or their home address).

Respondents were asked to report how they typically travel. These results showed that the survey was widely distributed and matched the multimodal character of the neighborhood. Respondents would choose multiple options:

- 60% report driving on Castor
- 27% report taking transit
- 6% report biking
- 38% report walking



1: Survey Respondents Map

How Questions Were Asked & What People Had to Say:

To gauge support for the many different aspects of the project, and to allow for more nuance than “yes or no”, we asked respondents to rate individual elements of the project on a 1-to-5 star scale, with 5 being the highest. They were also encouraged to tell us *why* they gave it this rating.

For online respondents, additional context was given through a pros/cons list, as well as an example image of a similar treatment elsewhere in the area.

The section below presents the question asked of respondents, the photo and context provided, as well as the average response of all survey respondents on the 1-to-5 star scale.

Q1: Pedestrian Lighting

Attractive, 15-foot-tall light poles that provide more sidewalk-level light for pedestrians

Pros: Beautifies the corridor for businesses and shoppers; increases light along the sidewalk at night

Cons: Cost; Disruption to businesses during construction

Would you like to see Pedestrian Lighting on Castor Ave?



2: Pedestrian lighting on Torresdale Avenue

Pedestrian Lights – 4.6



Q2: Street Trees

Planted in the sidewalk along the curb.

Pros: Provides shade on hot days; Soaks up rainwater; Beautifies the corridor for businesses and shoppers

Cons: Need to water, leaf clean up, litter in tree pits

Would you like to see Street Trees on Castor Ave?



3: Street trees on Torresdale Avenue

Street Trees – 4.2



Q3: Curb and Sidewalk repair

Pros: Improves pedestrian access to local businesses; removes tripping hazards, provides a fresh look for the corridor

Cons: Cost

Would you like to see Curb and Sidewalk Repair on Castor Avenue?

Curb & Sidewalk Repair – 4.7



Q4: Upgraded Transit Stops”

Extension of the sidewalk towards the street at bus stops

Pros: Speeds up the Route 59; Makes it easier for people with disabilities to get on and off the bus; Provides more space for people waiting for the bus; Shortens the distance for pedestrians crossing Castor Ave

Cons: Bus stops will be reduced to every other block; The bus will not pull over out of traffic

Would you like to see upgraded bus stops on Castor Avenue?

Transit Stops – 4.1



4: New curbs and sidewalks on Oxford Avenue



5: Bus/trolley boarding island on Richmond Street

Q5: Raised Bike Lane

A space for bicycles up on the sidewalk that is physically separated from moving vehicles

Pros: Encourages people to ride a bike; Provides a safe space for bicyclists of all ages and abilities; Shortens pedestrian crossing distances and increases safety

Cons: Increases project cost

Would you like to see raised bike lanes on Castor Avenue?



6: Raised bike lane on Penn Street

Raised Bike Lanes – 4.0



Q6: Speed Bumps on Castor Avenue

Asphalt bumps located in travel lanes that force vehicles to slow down; they can be designed so that emergency vehicles and buses do not have to slow down

Pros: Slows traffic and reduces high-speed crashes (people are more likely to die in high-speed crashes)

Cons: Causes a bumpy inconvenience to drivers

Would you like to see speed bumps on Castor Avenue?



7: Speed cushions on Castor Ave in the Northwood neighborhood

Speed Bumps – 3.7



Q7: Speed Bumps on Other Neighborhood Streets

Would you like to see speed bumps on other neighborhood streets?

Speed Bumps (Nearby) – 3.6



Q8: Loading Zones

Areas in front of stores on Castor Avenue that permit free short-term parking (typically 15 to 30 minutes; parking on Castor currently costs \$1.40 per hour)

Pros: Allows space for delivery trucks making drop-offs and customers making a quick trip into a store;
Reduces double parking

Cons: Removes a parking space while loading zone is active



8: Loading zone on Frankford Avenue

Would you like to see loading zones on Castor Avenue?

Loading Zones - 3.8



Q9: "4-to-3 Lane" Road Diet

Reduces the number of vehicle travel lanes from 2 in each in direction and creates a new center left-turn lane



9: Tyson Avenue after road diet

Pros: Reduces speeding and crashes (people are more likely to die in high-speed crashes); Creates a left turn lane, which makes left turns safer and easier; Discourages dangerous driving such as weaving through lanes

Cons: Can be used for center lane passing

Would you like to see a 4-to-3 lane road diet with left turn lanes on Castor Avenue?

Road Diet - Overall - 3.9



10/10/24 In-Person Community Meeting

Meeting Format

The in-person community meeting was held using a facilitated table model. This allowed the project team to have in-depth conversations with everyone who attended. It also allowed attendees to have conversations with neighbors and to understand their feelings on the project.

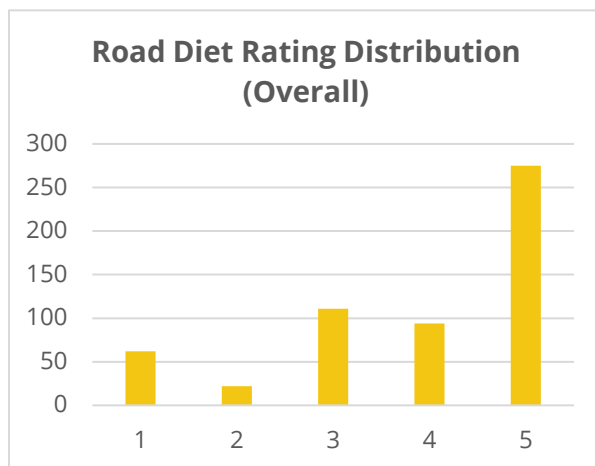
The meeting was well attended, with approximately 70 neighbors in attendance. Almost all of the attendees also filled out a survey that was manually entered into the database of online responses.

Results & Takeaways

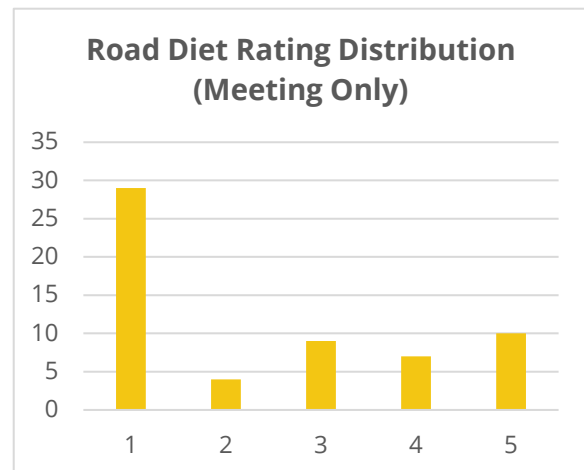
The online responses for the project were generally more positive than those who attended the meeting. The most vocal stakeholders at the in-person community meeting felt strongly against the road diet (29 “1 star” responses); however, the rest of the meeting attendees (30) fell on the 2-to-5 star spectrum. Ultimately, the average rating was a neutral 2.4. At the in-person meeting, the road diet was the only element that scored below a 2.5 on average.

Overall, 65% of respondents rated the road diet a 4 or 5. 85% of respondents rated the road diet a 3 or higher. Only 15% of respondents opposed the road diet, rating it a 2 or lower.

Road Diet – Overall - 3.9



Road Diet – Meeting – 2.4



Business Engagement

In addition to the community meeting and the online survey, City staff visited the businesses along the corridor and spoke to as many of them as possible. This included staff who are fluent in Spanish and Chinese. One staff member spoke limited Portuguese and was able to speak to those merchants.

Staff administered the project survey to business owners after explaining the project to them. In addition, staff also surveyed each merchant regarding their parking and loading needs. These results will be available to develop a final signage plan as part of final engineering for the project.

In sum, City staff surveyed 42 businesses. Approximately half of those businesses indicated that they would like a loading zone.