

Castor Avenue Project FAQ

Updated May 13, 2025

Purpose and Need Statement:

The **purpose** of the Castor Avenue project is to beautify the street, support neighborhood businesses, and enhance the safety of the corridor. The project will improve safety by reducing the incidence of angle, pedestrian, and fatal/injury crashes along the corridor from Oxford Circle to Cottman Avenue.

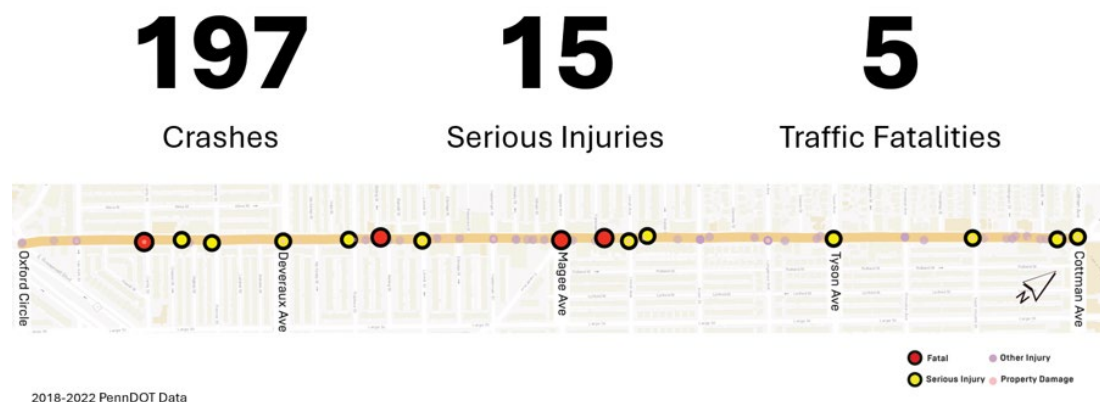
The project's **needs** stem from the documented crash history. PennDOT crash data shows that there were 197 crashes on Castor Avenue between 2018 and 2022, resulting in 5 fatalities and 15 serious injuries. This corridor is part of the Vision Zero High Injury network, identified as a key area for traffic safety improvements. The corridor is also an important neighborhood commercial corridor for Northeast Philadelphia, and the scope of the work has grown to include improvements to the streetscape.

Project Goals:

These improvements align with the goals of the Castor Avenue project to:

1. Beautify the street
2. Support neighborhood businesses
3. Make it safer for pedestrians to cross the street
4. Make public transit faster and more reliable
5. Improve safety for everyone who uses Castor Avenue

Castor Avenue Crash History



Questions & Answers

1. Will the project create congestion?
 - a. Traffic analysis for the project shows that between Van Kirk and Cottman, during the AM peak, the changes in travel times are expected to increase by fewer than 6 seconds, or less than 0.5 seconds per block. At the PM peak, travel times are expected to increase by 32-38 seconds, about 2.5-3 seconds per block. For context, travel times are roughly 5-6 minutes today. At less busy times of day, there will be no impact on traffic congestion.
 - b. Today, much of the capacity of the 2nd lane of Castor Avenue is blocked by vehicles making left turns.

2. Will the project make Castor Avenue safer?
 - a. Yes, this project will improve safety on Castor Avenue. Nationally, road diets show crash reductions between 19 and 47%. In Philadelphia, studies have shown that road diets have reduced speeding by 25%. This analysis found that Complete Streets projects, which include road diets and other safety treatments, have reduced fatal and serious injury crashes by 34%, compared to other high-crash corridors.
 - b. Additional safety improvements will be generated through new traffic signals with overhead mast arms and pedestrian countdown signals, curb extensions at bus stops, raised bike lanes, and better lighting.
 - c. From FHWA documentation: a Road Diet, or roadway reconfiguration, can improve safety, calm traffic, provide better mobility and access for all road users, and enhance overall quality of life. Road Diets typically involve converting an existing four-lane undivided roadway to a three-lane roadway consisting of two through lanes and a center two-way left-turn lane (TWLTL). Benefits of Road Diet installations include:
 - i. Reduction of rear-end and left-turn crashes due to the dedicated left-turn lane.
 - ii. Reduced right-angle crashes as side street motorists cross three versus four travel lanes.
 - iii. Fewer lanes for pedestrians to cross.
 - iv. Opportunity to install pedestrian refuge islands, bicycle lanes, on-street parking, or transit stops.
 - v. Traffic calming and more consistent speeds.
 - vi. A more community-focused, Complete Streets environment that better accommodates the needs of all road users.

3. Does Castor Avenue have a safety problem?

- a. Yes, PennDOT crash data shows that there were 197 crashes on Castor Avenue between 2018 and 2022. These crashes resulted in 5 people dying and 15 people being seriously injured.
 - b. Castor is on the Vision Zero High Injury network, meaning that it was identified as a key corridor for traffic safety improvements as part of the City and PennDOT's goal of eliminating traffic fatalities.
4. When will construction happen?
 - a. Construction is anticipated to start in 2027. This may change as the project moves through final engineering.
5. How long will construction take?
 - a. Construction is anticipated to take approximately 18 months, but this will be refined as the project moves through final engineering.
6. How much will the project cost? Is it fully funded?
 - a. The project is anticipated to cost approximately \$27 million, including engineering, inspections, and accounting for unforeseen contingencies. The project is approximately 75% funded.
7. How is the project funded? Can the funding be used to do different things on Castor Avenue?
 - a. The project is primarily funded through traffic safety-focused grants, including Highway Safety Improvement Funds, Automated Speed Enforcement awards, and DCED Multimodal Transportation Fund awards. These funds are required to be used to build safer, more accessible transportation infrastructure.
8. Can a signal be added north of Oxford Circle for pedestrians?
 - a. The location will be reviewed as part of the final design and engineering phase.
9. Can dedicated left-turn signals be added to the project?
 - a. This may be possible at some intersections. As part of the final design and engineering of the project, intersections will be analyzed for dedicated left-turn signals.
10. Can dedicated left-turn signals be added *without* a road diet?
 - a. No, dedicated left-turn signals cannot be added in both directions on Castor without first creating dedicated left-turn lanes. Since there isn't enough roadway space for separate left-turn lanes, vehicles turning left would block through traffic and conflict with oncoming left-turning vehicles. Without dedicated lanes, it's not safe or efficient to operate left-turn signals in both directions at the same time.

11. Can planters be added to the corridor?

- a. Yes, it is possible to add planters to the corridor. The City will work with community members and neighborhood groups to develop a strategy for plantings and maintenance.

12. How will trees be maintained?

- a. Property owners will be contacted and allowed to opt out of new street trees. Street trees will be selected from the approved street tree list, working in coordination with property owners. Additionally, the City will work with neighborhood partners to explore additional support for tree and landscaping maintenance before the project goes to construction. The City also prunes and removes hazardous trees.

13. Can speed cameras be added to Castor Avenue?

- a. Act 38 of 2023 expanded the Automated Speed Enforcement (ASE) program to include up to five additional corridors within the City of Philadelphia, based on speeding-related crash data. The Act also authorized a five-year ASE pilot program in up to five school zones.
- b. In coordination with PennDOT, the City of Philadelphia has identified an initial list of five corridors, beyond Roosevelt Boulevard, for ASE implementation. Castor Avenue was evaluated as a high-crash corridor but was not identified as one of these five new corridors.
- c. The corridor has been allocated funding from the ASE program to improve traffic safety, as it is a parallel corridor to Roosevelt Boulevard.
- d. Additional information is available here: <https://visionzerophl.com/plans-and-reports/ase-report-2024/>

14. Will cyclists use the raised bike lanes?

- a. The City has found that after the installation of separated bike facilities in other locations, cycling has doubled. Additionally, separated bike lanes resulted in 17% fewer injury crashes compared to other high-injury network streets.
- b. Castor Avenue is also a strong destination for people cycling, due to the number of businesses, proximity to schools and work, and a dense residential neighborhood.
- c. Approximately 20% of households along this corridor do not have access to a car.

15. Can loading zones be added behind the businesses?

- a. Some businesses have space behind their properties for truck loading; however, some do not and require space for on-street loading. Additionally, much of the demand for loading is due to food delivery, package delivery, and other similar services that need to access the front door.

- b. The project team has surveyed merchants to ensure that any loading zones improve the loading situation at that business, without unnecessarily removing parking.
 - c. New parking and loading regulations will be installed as part of the project to create loading when and where it is needed while preserving parking for local businesses and nearby residences.
- 16. Could Castor Avenue be 1 lane in 1 direction and 2 lanes in the other?
 - a. While technically feasible, this would be the wrong safety application for this roadway corridor. Castor Avenue has similar levels of traffic at peak hours – southbound in the morning, and northbound in the afternoon. Both peaks are accommodated in a single “through” lane with a dedicated left turn lane. Additionally, excess roadway capacity at off-peak hours leads to speeding and aggressive driving.
- 17. Can the intersection with Magee Avenue be made safer?
 - a. As part of the project, bump outs will be incorporated at several corners at the intersection of Magee which will shorten the crossing distance for pedestrians, thus making the intersection safer. Pedestrian countdown timers (a proven safety treatment) will also be included as part of the project to improve safety.
- 18. Will the speed limit change?
 - a. No. The speed limit is not anticipated to change as part of this project.
- 19. Do projects like this hurt small businesses?
 - a. No, studies from around the country have found increased economic activity after projects like this one due to increased foot traffic. For example, New York found that sales tax revenue increase along corridors with Complete Streets projects¹, and a national study found that Complete Streets projects generated a 10x economic impact over the cost of the project.²
- 20. Will construction disrupt business?
 - a. Impacts on businesses will be minimized as much as possible. This work will occur in the public right-of-way. Similar projects constructed around the City have been done without closing the roadway and with limited sidewalk closures. The full impacts of construction will be developed during final design and coordinated with businesses.
- 21. Why can't the funding for this project be spent on picking up litter or enforcement?
 - a. That's a common question, and it's important to clarify. The funding for this project is specifically set aside for safety and streetscape improvements—it can't be used

¹ [dot-economic-benefits-of-sustainable-streets.pdf](#)

² [huduser.gov/portal/periodicals/cityscape/vol26num2/ch17.pdf](#)



for things like repaving other roads, litter cleanup, or enforcement. It's not part of a general budget that can be shifted around. The funding can't be reallocated to something else, like increasing trash pickup or enforcement. It would be dedicated to similar types of street safety and design improvements.

22. How will this project affect parking?
 - a. Parking will remain on both sides of Castor Avenue.
 - b. Concrete bump-outs will be installed at bus stops to prevent illegal parking in the bus stop and improve access for people with disabilities.
 - c. The City will work with businesses to identify loading zones where needed.
23. Will seniors or people in wheelchairs be able to board the bus?
 - a. Yes, the new boarding platforms make this much easier, as you won't need to step down into the street and then get onto the bus or walk around a parked car.
24. Will buses block the travel lane?
 - a. Yes, for a short time. However, the new boarding islands mean buses will board in line, allowing passengers to move quickly and block traffic for shorter periods. Buses will stop less frequently, reducing the impact on traffic.
 - b. The Route 59 currently operates 4-to-5 trips per hour at peak periods, meaning that bus blockages will only occur approximately every 10-15 minutes.
25. How does this project affect the Route 59 trackless trolley?
 - a. SEPTA expects that this project will result in more reliable, accessible, and safe transit service on Castor Avenue. This project will add sidewalk bumpouts to make boarding SEPTA quicker and easier, especially for seniors and those with mobility issues. By making the boarding process quicker, SEPTA expect this project will reduce the time spent sitting at stops and result in quicker and more reliable rides.
26. Why are you removing SEPTA stops with this project?
 - a. SEPTA has the closest average stop-to-stop spacing of any large transit agency in the country. This frequent stopping results in extra delay for riders and makes it challenging to keep buses on time.
 - b. Reducing the number of stops is expected to reduce time sitting at stops or getting stuck at traffic signals, minimize impacts to on-street parking, and limit the number of times traffic might get caught behind a stopped bus. Castor Ave will have fewer, better stops that will improve the rider's experience.
27. How did you determine which SEPTA stops to remove?
 - a. SEPTA looked at overall ridership, senior and reduced fare boardings, proximity to major destinations and transferring bus routes, locations with controlled pedestrian crossings, and uniform spacing lengths to identify which stops should be removed and which should be upgraded to bumpouts. The majority of overall riders, as well as senior, student, and disabled riders, will retain their current stop.



28. Why build raised bike lanes?
- a. Raised bike lanes are a form of separated bike lanes. These improve safety for everyone using the street by physically separating bikes from moving vehicles and limiting interactions between people walking and people biking.
 - b. Studies have shown that there are a lot of people who are interested in biking – whether it's for their commute, for fun, or to shop in their neighborhood. Separated bike facilities are the best way to make riding a bike a comfortable activity, no matter your confidence level in cycling.