



## Planning for Trucks #20

### Introduction

Planning for trucks across Pennsylvania's roadways is crucial for the future of our environment and economy. Townships, boroughs, and cities need to engage in proper planning to minimize community impacts and prevent possible damage to the local infrastructure. Understanding the importance of zoning ordinances, land usage, buffer areas, and new terminology within industrial development can help municipalities better prepare themselves for trucking impacts.

Over the last decade, Pennsylvania has become a hub for many warehousing and distribution centers due to overall population growth in the state and surrounding region, the shift in e-commerce, and a demand for faster delivery. Pennsylvania is a transportation gateway for the Mid-Atlantic because of the existing interstate network, land availability, resources, and the close proximity of major metropolitan areas.

### PROPER PLANNING PRECLUDES PROBLEMS

Current logistics facilities have the potential to generate heavy vehicle traffic and noise, aesthetic, and environmental impacts unanticipated by older zoning ordinances. The boom in warehousing development and the corresponding truck traffic has caught many areas of Pennsylvania off-guard. Thus, many regions are reacting to the building boom and the accompanying truck traffic rather than planning effectively in advance.

By getting ahead of the development with proper planning, municipalities can help to alleviate some of these issues before they begin.

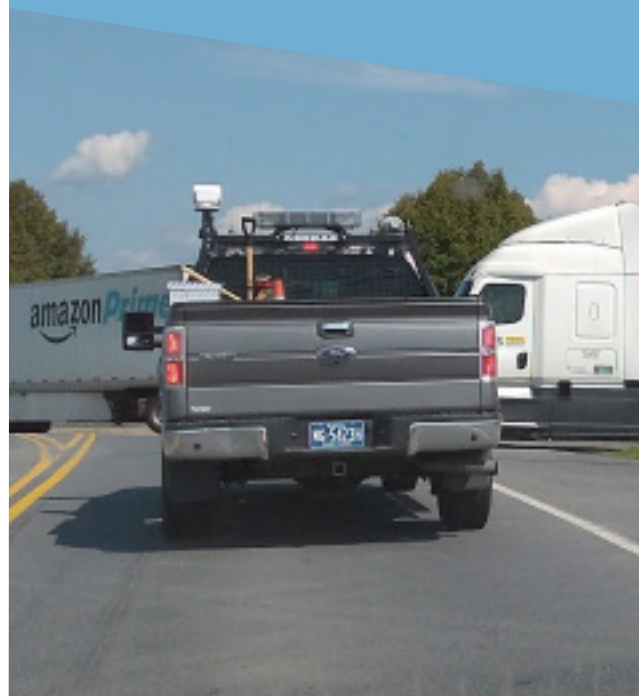
Warehouse developments cannot simply be banned in the comprehensive plan and by zoning. Pennsylvania law balances the needs of the community with the rights of people to develop their property.

### ZONING

Zoning is the regulation of how land is used and is the best technique for municipalities to regulate and control the growth of development. The zoning ordinance should be updated to include definitions for the many new facilities related to the distribution of goods, including:

- Distribution Centers
- Fulfillment Centers

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- Last-mile Fulfillment Stations
- Trucking Company Terminals
- Truck Stops
- Intermodal Truck Terminals
- Warehouses

Next, municipalities should review the base zoning and overlay districts to determine where freight-based uses are permitted. These are all the land uses that can generate truck traffic, including quarries, manufacturing facilities, port or rail terminals, and other uses beyond warehousing. *All infrastructure requirements for development, including roadways, should be reviewed.*

Other zoning considerations:

- Establish a reasonable section of the land for warehousing uses.
- Use zoning overlay districts to establish the best locations for warehousing that minimize impacts.

Zoning ordinances also will establish the specific details required from the development, from lighting to parking to buffer areas, that warehousing locations should consider, including:

- Consistency with community goals and a comprehensive plan.
- Proximity to major transportation corridors.
- Access roads from the corridors to the land, including the capacity of the roadway network, as well as the capability to accommodate trucks.
- Access to freight rail infrastructure for warehouse users that need it.
- Sensitive environmental areas.
- Compatibility with nearby uses.
- Access for workers, including public transportation.

## P'S FOR FREIGHT RELATED PLANNING

- Planning
  - FutureLV: The Regional Plan
  - Long-Range Transportation Plan
  - Land Uses of Regional Significance
  - Pennsylvania Freight Movement Plan and related initiatives (through PennDOT Program Center)
  - Regional/MPO Freight Plans
- Practice
  - Zoning code provisions

- [Local Technical Assistance Program](#) (LTAP)
- Lehigh Valley Government Academy
- Eastern Transportation Corridor (formerly the I-95 Corridor Coalition) Freight Academy
- Partnerships
  - MPO freight advisory committees (e.g., DVRPC Goods Movement Task Force, York County Freight Advisory Committee)
  - State and regional freight organizations and events (PennDOT Freight Work Group, SPC Freight Forum)
  - Public-private partnerships

Multi-municipal planning is a strategic way to collaborate with neighboring communities to work together rather than independently. This strategy not only focuses on the communities but also the challenges facing the region as a whole.

The most important aspect of planning and integrating updates to municipal codes is the political will to make tough and sometimes unpopular decisions that align with the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code. There is no magic elixir to solve truck concerns in a community without also impacting the goods and services that the trucks bring; however, using the planning tools featured above can help your community strike the right balance.

### Resources:

- Freight Planning: <https://www.dot.state.pa.us/public/PubsForms/Publications/PUB%20790.pdf>
- TAC study: [tac-truck-parking-12-14-2023-compressed.pdf](https://talkpatransportation.com/tac-truck-parking-12-14-2023-compressed.pdf) (talkpatransportation.com)
- LVPC annual report: <https://www.flipsnack.com/9A575F88B7A/2023-annual-report/full-view.html>
- PennDOT Connects: <https://www.penndot.gov/ProjectAndPrograms/Planning/Pages/PennDOT-Connects.aspx>
- LTAP: <https://gis.penndot.pa.gov/ltap/>

Photos courtesy of Lehigh Valley Planning Commission.