



***VISTA 2025 Goal 5:***

***Support critical infrastructure in targeted corridors of opportunity***

**Initial Goal 5 Team Meeting**

**December 7, 2016**

**Meeting Notes**

**Team Members Attending:** Diane Disney, Phil Eastman, Charles Fleischmann, Matt Hammond, Michael, Hankin, Jim Horn, Michelle Kichline, Steve Krug, Greg Newell, Tim Phelps, Robert Schonenberger, Paul Spiegel, Coleen Terry, James Turner, Jeffrey Valocchi, Chris Williams, Neil Fisher

**Also Attending:** Tim Phelps, Mary Frances McGarrity, David Sciocchetti

**Michelle Kichline**

Welcomed attendees and invited introductions. Asked for comments on meeting notes from previous meeting. No comments received.

**David Sciocchetti**

Reviewed draft VISTA 2025 progress report and invited feedback including any items to be modified or added.

## **Charles Fleischmann**

Asked if the report would be available electronically when it was finalized and was advised that it would be.

## **Tim Phelps**

Provided background for discussion of Route 202/Great Valley transportation issues and challenges. Noted that the area had 25,000 employees and was one of the major employment centers in the region. Added that Route 202 is the vehicular spine for the area serving some 25,000 vehicles per day. Commented that PennDOT has invested over \$200 million in the area since 2012 including over \$100 million in the widening and improvements to Route 202.

Described the role of the Transportation Management Association of Chester County (TMACC). Noted focus on congestion and pollution mitigation and addressing current reliance on single occupant vehicles. Looking at solutions that may involve SEPTA, Amtrak, private buses, shuttles and other alternatives to the single occupant vehicle.

Described key transportation issues facing Great Valley. Commented that east-west travel is well accommodated but that north-south access is challenging. Added that 25,000 people live in the area and face rush hour challenges.

Noted that the Paoli Transit Center handles in excess of 900,000 travelers a year utilizing Amtrak and SEPTA services. Added that the new Route 29 interchange with the Pennsylvania turnpike recorded 175,000 accessing the Turnpike and 179,000 getting off at the interchange in 2016.

Noted that the completion of the Route 202 improvements have helped significantly. Added that there is no connection of the Chester Valley Trail to Great Valley.

Described obstacles to reducing dependence on single occupant vehicles including: historic mindset, lack of 24/7 live work options within Great Valley that would reduce the need for more vehicle trips, the historic presence of free parking, zoning restrictions,

relatively inexpensive gasoline, high area salaries that support the ability to utilize single occupant vehicle.

Presented opportunities that can begin to address the challenges including: car-pooling, van pooling, on demand ride hailing services, improvements to the Keystone Corridor stations and service that make it more attractive, and on the horizon autonomous vehicles and outside-the-box ideas like a gondola system.

**Paul Spiegel**

Commented that millennials provide an opportunity to move in new directions.

**Chris Williams**

Noted that a significant number of workers live in Philadelphia and commute to Great Valley to work, many utilizing the Vanguard shuttle. Suggested that a better “last mile” connection is needed.

**Mike Hankin**

Suggested that that fact that Great Valley is not very walkable inhibits the use of public transportation.

**Diane Disney**

Commented that the area’s strength in helicopters might be a part of the solution.

**Neil Fisher**

Pointed out that Eagleview had addressed part of the problem in that it was designed to be walkable but that the challenge was getting SEPTA to extend service through a better connection to the Exton station.

**Steve Krug**

Described a project for a 600 acre base that structured the mixed use development to minimize traffic impact.

**Mike Hankin**

Suggested that these types of solutions required certain densities that have not traditionally been favored in Chester County.

**Chris Williams**

Noted that some of the developers had begun to make changes, pointing out that Atwater was being re-imagined as a mixed use community and that Liberty Property Trust also had plans for mixed use development.

**Diane Disney**

Pointed out that Uptown Worthington was supposed to be a part of that process.

**Chris Williams**

Noted that in the summer of 2018 there would be Route 29 construction that would limit travel to two lanes, adding that there were very limited north-south alternatives. Suggested that this might be an opportunity to implement new strategies like flexible work hours.

**Diane Disney**

Reported on a meeting in Harrisburg addressing autonomous vehicles, noting that there were still issues to be resolved involving a vehicles ability to make critical decisions where people are involved.

**Michelle Kichline**

Advanced the meeting agenda to focus on some of the challenges related to infrastructure in Chester County.

**Mike Hankin**

Introduced the notion that layers of requirements make it difficult to advance projects in the county.

**Neil Fisher**

Stated that on average it costs 25% more to develop a new site, pointing out that redevelopment can be more attractive due to the lower infrastructure costs. Suggested it might be productive to pull together a task force focused on getting projects across the finish line. Described efforts to advance a TOD project in Downingtown and noted the value of having a team focused on addressing issues at the outset.

**Chris Williams**

Suggested that parking requirements may need to be addressed as current requirements do not reflect the changing market realities. Less restrictive parking requirements could free up resources for more mixed approaches to transportation like bikes and transit.

**Charles Fleischmann**

Noted that may require a legislative solution.

**Chris Williams**

Responded that perhaps an incentive approach might work better.

**Mike Hankin**

Referred to the new Chester County Planning Commission multi-modal handbook. Noted that while this was a positive step, some municipalities still resist density even though it allows for many desired outcomes.

**Neil Fisher**

Commented that education and more informed discussions were definitely needed. Added that many communities still favor one acre lot subdivisions.

**Paul Spiegel**

Asked how many trips could be eliminated with a mixed use approach versus a traditional approach.

**Mike Hankin**

Indicated that somewhere between 15% and 20% could potentially be eliminated.

**Diane Disney**

Commented that many millennials don't want to own cars but do want access to amenities via some form of transportation.

**Neil Fisher**

Added that recent changes to environmental regulations regarding storm water management have also significantly increased the cost of new projects.

**Mike Hankin**

Commented that limited municipal budgets have forced municipalities to seek to transfer costs to the developer for public improvements. Education is needed to help local governments understand the impacts of their decisions on the kind of development that occurs.

**Michelle Kichline**

Noted that the county has a limited role in that the Planning Commission's comments on local development are only advisory. Final decisions on zoning and subdivision issues rest at the local level.

**James Turner**

Commented that education is important in helping municipalities navigate complex issues. Suggested that perhaps some form of additional support system might be considered.

**Neil Fisher**

Noted that people are often slow to understand and react to market changes. Suggested a need to be pro-active.

**David Sciocchetti**

Noted that the Chester County Planning Commission was a county wide resource and that they had taken the lead on a Commercial Landscapes Task Force designed to look at some of these critical issues.

**Mary Frances McGarrity**

Noted that the report of the task force should be available in the near future.

**Michelle Kichline**

Reported that the stakeholder meetings for Landscapes 3 were underway and provided the first opportunity to be heard on these kinds of issues. Thanked all for attending and adjourned meeting.