

## 2.0 Introduction

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### 2.1 Study Background

The Erie County Department of Planning's 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) formally noted the US 19 corridor as an area in need of a systematic review of land use and transportation issues.

As part of implementing its LRTP, the agency in October 2003 initiated a study of the US 19 corridor. Study stakeholders included PennDOT and the three study area municipalities of Summit Township, Waterford Borough and Waterford Township. The total study area is approximately 26 square miles in size and involves an estimated 16,500 acres. The US 19 roadway itself is a rural arterial within central Erie County linking Waterford Borough with I-90.

Perhaps the most significant issue at stake in the US 19 study corridor includes the fate of over 6,583 acres of open space and undeveloped land within the study area. These parcels that are "in play" will have a significant effect on the safety and future performance of the US 19 corridor and the surrounding highway network, depending upon how they are ultimately developed. The ongoing commercialization of the corridor further south has heightened the need for a comprehensive evaluation of land use, transportation and economic development issues within the US 19 study corridor.

**"A land use and transportation corridor study is recommended to demonstrate the linkage between land use and transportation in the corridor." - Erie County LRTP**

### 2.2 Study Purpose

US 19/Peach Street is recognized as an established and growing commercial corridor in central Erie County. The corridor - and indeed much of Summit Township - has evolved as part of the suburbanization trend of the post-World War II era. From the 1950s to the 1970s, Summit Township more than doubled in population size with a rate of increase of 140 percent. Along with the population increase has been commercial and other employment-related development that has come with the advent of I-90 and improvements to US 19.

While Summit Township's growth has plateaued since 1980, population growth in neighboring Waterford Township has remained consistent over the past 35 years. The township grew by a third during the 1970s. Growth rates since then have slowed to some extent, yet the township still grew at a rate of 14 percent during the 1990s. Since 1980, Waterford Township's housing stock has increased by over 50 percent, outpacing even Summit Township. The township is increasingly being viewed as a desirable place to live.

**"The successful completion of this study will result in an integrated land use and transportation implementation plan that is consistent with the community's social, economic and environmental goals."**

A common concern among the public and municipal officials involves the protection of the area's natural resources (farmland and open space), as well as the future performance of the US 19 corridor through these communities. Public sewer service is now available as far south as the Summit/Waterford Township line, and the development of commercial retail establishments has continued, transforming the corridor from a rural commuter highway to a suburban highway with regional commercial destinations. A key land use management feature of the study area includes an 800 foot wide strip of commercially zoned land that is centered on the US 19 roadway.

In addition to land use and farmland/open space preservation concerns is the need for transportation improvements. The Erie County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) will in summer 2005 begin its biennial update of the 2007 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). One study priority was to identify candidate projects for the MPO's TIP update. In addressing safety issues, there were a number of maintenance-related projects identified as well to be addressed through PennDOT's ongoing maintenance and Betterment programs.

Through attention to these planning issues - land use management and transportation - the study area municipalities sought to develop a plan that anticipates and accommodates development, rather than reacting to it.

### **2.3 Study Goals/Objectives**

At the outset of the study, the study steering committee established key study directions and supporting objectives to help guide the study effort. The objectives used to guide the study include:

- Improve safety within the US 19 Corridor
- Provide ample municipal participation and coordination throughout the project
- Develop recommendations that are implementable.

In addition to study goals, the steering committee also identified study **success factors**, which were as follows: The study...

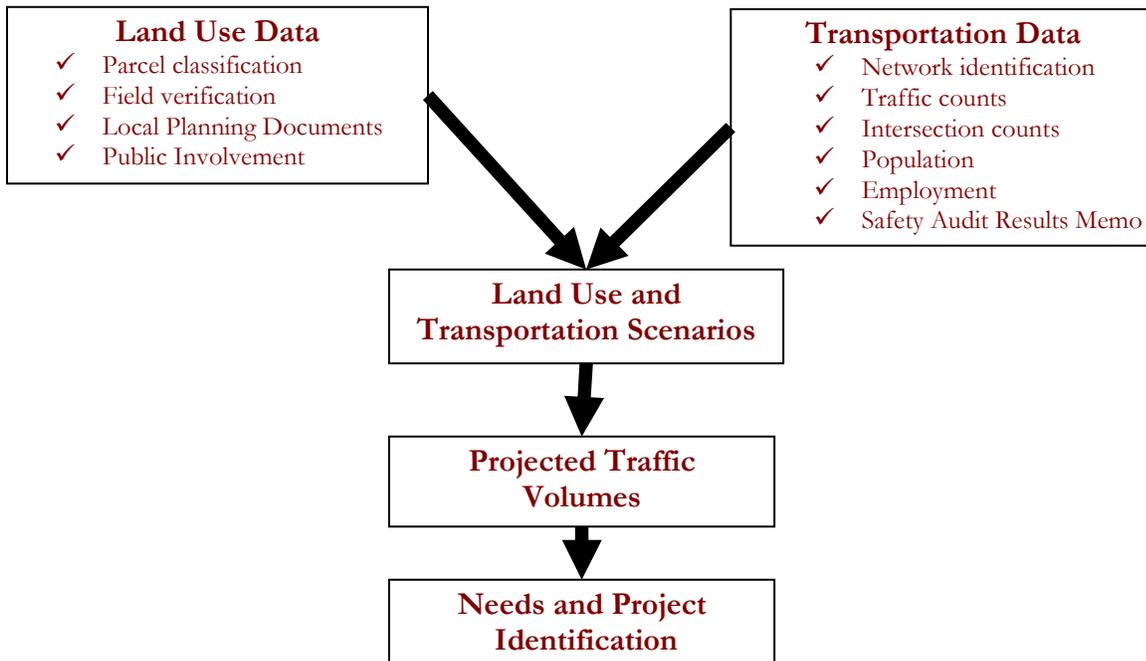
- ...promotes improved safety.
- ...recommendations are realistic.
- ...considers traffic flow along with safety.
- ...is viewed as important by the public and that the resultant recommendations will be implemented.
- ...provides information on traffic projections and future TIP projects.
- ...enjoys local "buy-in" by elected officials and those connected to local planning and zoning boards.
- ...anticipates what will happen in the future.

## 2.4 Methodology

The recommended transportation / land use scenario and resultant recommendations are the product of a process that began with the study team’s kickoff meeting on October 9, 2003. The study team adopted the project scope, which included an eleven-step process towards developing this final report, as follows:

1. Kick-off Study
2. Establish Base Mapping
3. Identify Stakeholders
4. Assess the Existing Land Use
5. Assess the Existing Transportation System
6. Assess the Existing Sewer and Water Infrastructure
7. Conduct Public Involvement # 1 (including an open house and focus group with the general public, an exit survey, and a business focus group)
8. Develop and Test Draft Recommendations
9. Conduct Public Involvement # 2 (including exit surveys, public open house with scheduled presentations)
10. Refine the Study Recommendations
11. Develop Final Report and Implementation Plan.

The methodology steps are discussed in the report within each section, and follow the study process chart below.



## **2.5 Document Organization**

This plan summarizes the existing land use, zoning, and traffic conditions for the US 19 Land Use and Transportation Study Area. The information presented in this document represents a baseline upon which various land use and transportation scenarios were developed and evaluated through the study process. This plan includes the sections listed and described below:

- Executive Summary
- Introduction
- Existing Conditions
- Public Involvement
- Development of Recommendations
- Choices for the Future
- Action Plan
- Appendices.