

## 2.6 System Sustainability and Livability

### Overview

Recently, the US Department of Transportation (DOT), the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the US Environmental Protection Agency formed the interagency 'Partnership for Sustainable Communities'. The goal of this partnership is to encourage the use of livability principles to create sustainable communities. Sustainable and livable communities are places that have a variety of housing and transportation choices, with destinations close to home. As a result, they tend to have lower transportation costs, reduce air pollution and stormwater runoff, preserve historic properties and sensitive lands, save people time in traffic, and are more economically resilient.

The key aspects to sustainability and livability in regards to the transportation system is the availability of multi-modal choices for residents, and the development of context sensitive solutions to improve the economic competitiveness of neighborhoods and enhance and protect the unique characteristics of each community.

In order to evaluate the transportation needs related to sustainability and livability, the planning process required an extensive outreach program to gather input from the public, municipal officials, and key community and economic development stakeholders. The process also involved a comprehensive review of previous plans and studies, and an analysis of the County's community, environmental, and cultural resources.

### Baseline Perspectives

The Erie LRTP incorporates the concepts of sustainability and livability through emphasizing multi-modal choices, context sensitive solutions, and the preservation of natural and historical resources.

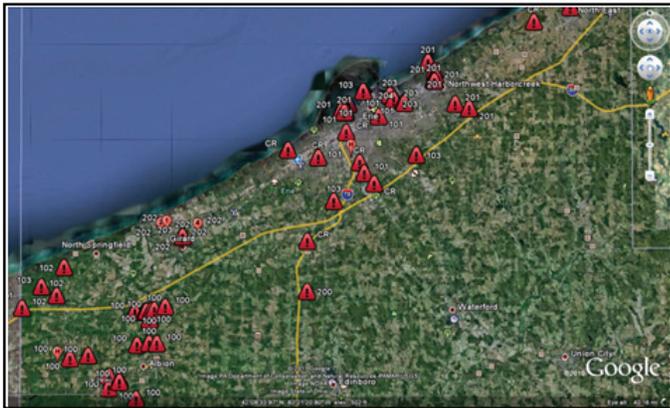
### Local Plans & Priorities

Understanding the land use of an area is vital to developing context sensitive transportation solutions. Early in the planning process, the project team reviewed the Erie County Comprehensive Plan and each Municipal Comprehensive Plan and zoning ordinance adopted by the communities within the county. This effort identified current zoning designations, targeted development areas, and downtown & neighborhood districts across the county.

*Within the Erie LRTP, System Sustainability and Livability overlaps with Federal Planning Factor #5: "Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns".*

*At the state level, a focus on economic vitality is inherent in the PA Mobility Plan Goal 2: "Improve the quality of life by linking transportation, land use, economic development, and environmental stewardship" and the Keystone Principles of fostering sustainable businesses, restoring and enhancing the environment, and enhancing recreational and heritage resources.*





In addition to the document review and land use analysis, the project team requested each of the 38 municipalities in the county to also review their respective plans and studies and submit community transportation priorities to the MPO via the standardized PennDOT Level 1 Screening form. In total 69 community priorities were submitted by the 23 municipalities that responded.

This effort established a land use context for the 2040 LRTP and also ensured that the Plan was consistent with local priorities.

## Public Outreach

Understanding land use is one element of context sensitive design and planning to support livability and sustainability, the other is understanding what the residents of a community value, and what business and economic development agencies need to ensure that their communities remain resilient and competitive.

Community input process is discussed below. The needs and concerns of the business and economic development communities are documented in Chapter 2.2.

## Public Meeting

A public meeting was held at the Blasco Memorial Library in downtown Erie. The meeting consisted of a presentation and a public engagement period in which participants to speak with the project team members at several workstations. Each workstation focused different elements of the plan including land use, population and employment forecasts, roadways, traffic volumes, traffic signals, trails, the intermodal passenger system, and the intermodal freight system. Each workstation included a map on which participants could draw and write. Participants could also engage with staff at two Google Earth stations. These stations allowed participants to identify concerns to team members via a geospatial mapping program. In addition to the work stations, participants were provided comment forms that could be submitted immediately or mailed in at a later date. In all, 53 Google Map Points were identified, 29 comment forms were received, and several concerns were identified on the workstation maps.



**ERIE COUNTY**

**LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN**

**Economic Development Survey**

*This survey will help inform the update to the Erie County Long Range Transportation Plan.*

*Our goal is to identify transportation related challenges that face the business / economic development community.*

Name of business/organization: MARSHA MARSH REAL ESTATE SERVICES  
 Type of business/organization: REAL ESTATE BROKERAGE  
 Address of business/organization: 8840 PEACH ST, #213, PA 16509

**Contact Information for Survey Follow-Up:**  
 Name: LABAN A. MARSH, Broker/owner  
 Email: LABAN.MARSH@MARSHAMARSH.COM  
 Phone Number: 814-440-8845 (cell) 814-866-8840 (office)

**What challenges are common for businesses in Erie County (or for your current or planned business site)?**

Site development     Environmental Problems     Water/Sewer     Transportation (roads)     Other  
 Please describe: PENNDOT VS MUNICIPALITIES OVER HOP.  
AS A PEACH ST. BUSINESS SOUTH OF I-90, ROADS ARE NOT  
ADEQUATE FOR GROWTH, IN FACT DANGEROUS w/ ONLY 2 LANES.

**What are the advantages of operating a business in Erie County?**

Access to raw materials     Location/Accessibility     Cost of doing business     Proximity to markets     None of these     Other  
 Please describe: LOW COST OF LIVING IS GREAT, TAXES ARE REASONABLE.  
CLOSE TO MAJOR MARKETS LIKE CLEVELAND, PITTSBURGH & BUFFALO.  
LAKE ERIE IS STILL UNDER UTILIZED, ESPECIALLY FOR REAL ESTATE.

**Do any of the following issues present a specific transportation challenge to the local business community (or to your business)?**

Lack of Parking     Yes     No     Somewhat    (please describe): CITY STREETS MAKE WINTERS CHALLENGING  
 Cost of Parking     Yes     No     Somewhat    (please describe):  
 Traffic Congestion     Yes     No     Somewhat    (please describe): UPPER PEACH SOUTH OF 90  
 Confusing Streets     Yes     No     Somewhat    (please describe): WE HAVE A NICE GRID, SIMILAR TO WASHINGTON  
 Lack of signage or wayfinding     Yes     No     Somewhat    (please describe): OVERALL IN THE COMMUNITY  
 Delivery times     Yes     No     Somewhat    (please describe):  
 Transportation costs     Yes     No     Somewhat    (please describe):  
 Other (please describe): INFRASTRUCTURE SEEMS TO BE BEHIND THE POTENTIAL GROWTH,  
NOT AHEAD AS ONE MIGHT HOPE.

Please return by February 14, 2011 to: Erie County Department of Planning / Attn: John Morgan  
 140 West Sixth Street, RM 111 / Erie, PA 16501 / PH: (814) 451-6012 / Email: jmorgan@eriecountygov.org

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Exhibit 2.6.1 - Transportation Prioritization from Online Survey

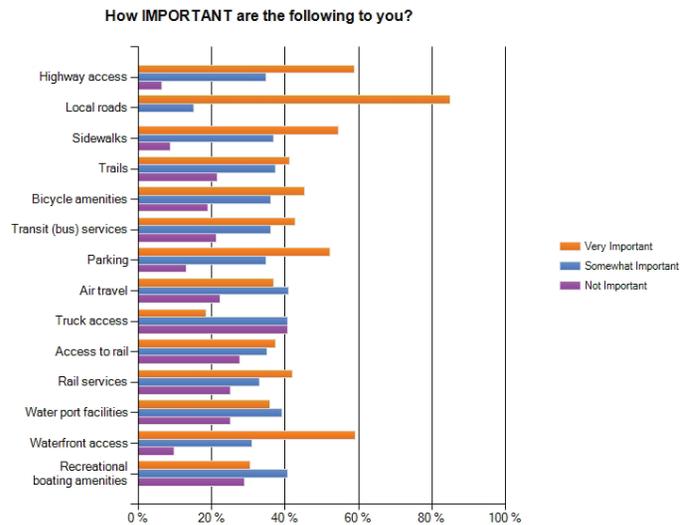
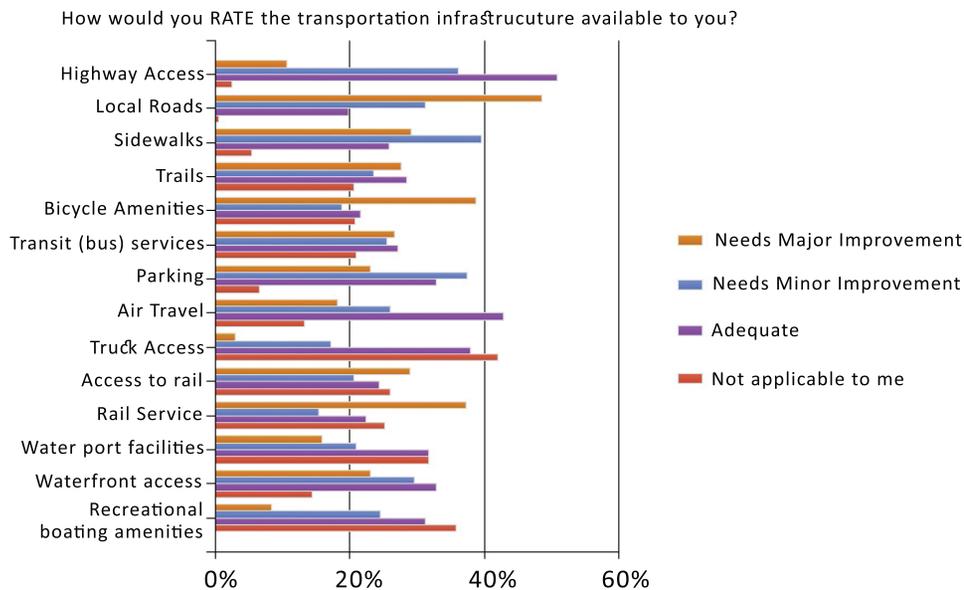


Exhibit 2.6.2 - Transportation Needs from Online Survey



Online Surveys

An online survey was also developed to solicit additional public input. The survey was two-tiered: a general survey and a project/issue specific survey. The general survey mirrored the public meeting comment form and sought information on travel behavior and priorities. The general survey provided the option to link to a project/issue specific survey that mirrored the information gathered in the PennDOT Level 1 Screening Forms. The online surveys were advertised via mass e-mail, the Erie County Department of Planning website, articles in local news publications, and goerie.com (website for the Erie Times News). In addition, the project team placed tent cards inviting the public to log into to the survey at each computer station in every public library located in Erie County. In all, 272 people responded to the general survey with 108 advancing to the detailed project/issue specific survey.

One of the questions asked via the online survey was how important a variety of transportation issues were to respondents (*Exhibit 2.6.1*)

Responses indicated that the top 3 transportation issues were local roads, highway access, and waterfront access. This was followed by questions that asked respondents to identify which of the transportation issues needed improvement (*Exhibit 2.6.2*)

Respondents indicated that local roads, followed by sidewalks, and parking needed the most improvement.



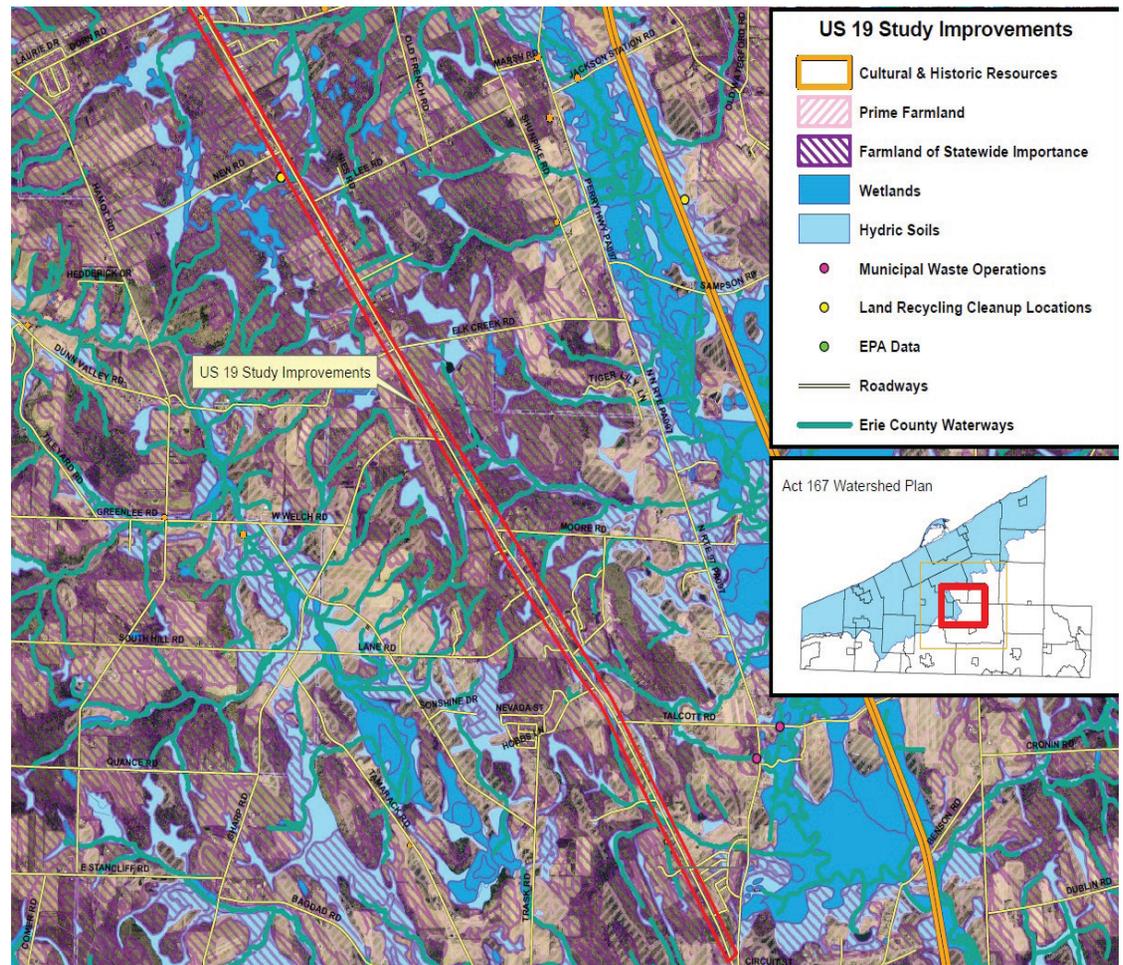
## Resources and Opportunities

Environmental, cultural, and community resources are all integral to a community's quality of life. Environmental resources include wetlands, forests, and farmland; cultural resources are our museums and historic places; and community resources are enjoyed at parks, schools, and tourist attractions. Access to these resources and their preservation help define a community's character and improve its sustainability and livability.

### Community Resources

Sustainable and livable communities offer numerous recreation, education, consumer, and education opportunities. The communities in Erie County have an advantage with a thriving tourism industry, numerous institutes of higher education, sports arenas, several downtown commercial districts, and a major shopping center. However, sustainable communities not only have these amenities, but also provide multi-modal access to them.

The transportation system as documented in Section 5 of this chapter does provide a variety of choices and connections including transit services, multi-use trails, cross-county bicycle routes, and sidewalk networks in urban areas. However areas for improvement have also been identified. Improving the availability of multi-modal choices and connecting those choices to community resources is an important performance measure of sustainability and livability for the transportation system.



### Environmental & Cultural Resources

Erie County is also rich in cultural and environmental resources. Several historical societies and other organizations maintain and preserve museums and landmarks throughout the county that are a source of community character and pride. The natural aspects of the county are equally important. The lakeshore, vineyards, and fishing streams are substantial draws for the tourist industries but are also vital to the culture, traditions, and sense of place held by our communities. While access to these locations is important, so too is their preservation.

These resources all fall under the protections of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). A key aspect to livability and sustainability is the protection of both cultural and environmental resources to ensure that our communities can enjoy them for generations. To accomplish this, the MPO has incorporated PennDOT's new project delivery process to ensure that the principles and objective of NEPA are linked with transportation planning process.

This process builds on the public and municipal out reach previously discussed in this section by utilizing geospatial information systems (GIS) and PennDOT's Linking Planning & NEPA Forms to identify potential environmental and cultural impacts that may be encountered during the construction of transportation projects. This early identification allows the MPO to coordinate with municipalities, PennDOT, and numerous resource agencies to develop projects that are context sensitive and reduce or mitigate impacts to environmental resources and avoid damaging historical landmarks.

### **Future Planning Perspectives**

Building and preserving sustainable and livable communities is a much more comprehensive effort than transportation planning alone, but the MPO can institute policies and programs to encourage sustainable planning and development:

- Continue to develop new methods to engage the public and update the Public Participation Plan
- Adopt a complete streets policy consistent with PennDOT's Smart Transportation Guidebook to ensure that context sensitive solutions are considered for all transportation projects
- Create an inventory of all pedestrian, cycling, and transit facilities to identify gaps and prioritize multi-modal improvements
- Coordinate with the Erie Metropolitan Transit Authority to update the Coordinated Human Services Plan to ensure that population centers have efficient and effect transit connections to community resources and employment opportunities
- Coordinate with the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission (PHMC), the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), and local historical and environmental organizations to maintain accurate geospatial data and identify opportunities to protect and enhance Erie County's resources.

*The success of the plan in improving system sustainability and livability will be measured by ranking projects based upon:*

***Environmental Justice Area** – Ability of the project to provide a distinct benefit or enhancement to a designated EJ area.*

***Recreational Opportunity** – Ability of the project to add, enhance, or benefit recreational opportunities of local, countywide, or regional scale.*

***Local Planning** – Ability of the project to address needs identified in or supported by existing municipal comprehensive plans or other locally adopted plans or studies.*

***Smart Transportation** – Ability of the project to be consistent with Smart Transportation principles.*

