



February 3, 2016

City of Easton
123 South Third Street
Easton, PA 18042

Subject: Easton Comprehensive Plan – Fall 2015, Notes & Comments

Dear Mayor Panto and Easton City Council,

Please find below my comments to support your tremendous effort in this project.

Our work at Coalition for Appropriate Transportation (CAT) to support smart bicycling, pedestrian access, trails and transit overlaps significantly with this 120 page vision for the next 20 years.

We appreciate that there has been a great effort by the Urban Matrix and MUD design teams to support walking, bicycling and continuing the growth of a vibrant city.

**Easton Comprehensive Plan Fall 2015
Notes & Comments by Scott Slingerland**

Page 10 (DC1) and Page 12 (DC8) – (referenced on Page 66/67)

Key Trail Connections: Delaware & Lehigh (D&L) Canal Towpath Trail

Connect downtown Easton with D&L trail with multi-use (walk, bike, ADA), to support trail users and promote businesses. The biggest obstacle to connecting the D&L trail with downtown is the narrow sidewalk on Route 611 (South Delaware Drive) and the South Third Street bridge across the Lehigh River, which also has a sidewalk too narrow to consider it a multi-use trail connector.

The D&L is a regional trail (165 miles long from Wilkes Barre to Bristol/Philadelphia) with huge potential being realized as missing links are being connected. Fortunately, Easton's section of the trail is already intact. Easton is strategically located at mile 60 of the trail. Include also D&L trail connectors with South Side, West Ward and College Hill where possible.

Key Trail Connections: Karl Stirner Arts Trail with Palmer/Tatamy/Plainfield Twp Trails

Connecting the Karl Stirner Arts Trail (KSAT) with the multi-use trail along the Bushkill Creek in Palmer, Tatamy, Stockertown, Plainfield Township, and Pen Argyl. The missing piece from 13th Street to Edgewood Ave (Palmer Twp) is key to connecting all of the above communities via trail that would span approximately 25 miles.

Key Trail Connections: Karl Stirner Arts Trail/West Ward with Wilson Bike Path

Another trail connector that would enhance the regional trail network is to connect Easton's West Ward, KSAT with the Wilson Bike Path at Lower Hackett Park at Wood Ave and 17th Street (Wilson Borough). This should be prioritized in the 13th Street Corridor project to provide enjoyable bicycle and pedestrian connectivity from 13th Street along Wood Avenue to Lower Hackett Park. This is strategic in that it not only provides recreational possibilities, but also trail

access to shopping in the 25th Street area (Wilson/Palmer) via relatively flat terrain. The Wilson Bike Path is already connected to the Palmer Township Bike Path at 25th Street, thereby demonstrating that trail access from Easton to Bethlehem Township would also be supported by this project.

Page 27 – Refers to “Black Diamond Coal Factory”. Is this the same as Page 60/61 “Black Diamond Silk Mill” and “Black Diamond Site”?

Page 29 – The D&L trail is a regional multi-use trail that connects City of Easton with City of Bethlehem, 13 miles west, with minimal road crossings. This should be considered one of the “key pieces that are already in place”

Page 37 – Photo caption: Promotion of business ownership by “Native Eastonians” seems less than welcoming to newcomers. No disrespect to Josh Palmer. He’s got a lot of great projects cooking!

Page 38 – Gateway improvements on Route 22 and I-78 could be to beautify the highways, including regularly retrieving trash along the highways in addition to other means of beautification and signage as discussed.

Page 40 – A great project to make Center Square more pedestrian-friendly. Discussion of expanding the center portion of the circle by converting the inner lane to sidewalk or open space – or- by other means, shorten pedestrian crossing distance and minimize waiting/queuing time for pedestrians and vehicles.

Page 56 – Bike lane shown in artist's rendering are shown adjacent to sidewalk. This increases likelihood of bicycle-pedestrian crashes. This style bike lane would not be suitable for cyclists as they will likely be traveling at speeds of 10-20 mph.

While bike lanes motivate more people to ride bicycles, the biggest technical challenge that bike lane designs have not overcome is intersection conflicts. A cyclist traversing straight through an intersection in a bike lane is at risk to collide with a turning motorist. Education of motorists and cyclists will remain the key to minimizing injury.

Page 75 - Promote education for cyclists, motorists & pedestrians of all ages

The city should sponsor programs like Walk/Bike-to-Work and Walk/Bike-to-School week annually, seasonally, or on an on-going basis, to promote biking and walking around Easton. With encouragement, people can recognize that the scale and character of Easton is great for bicycle transportation.

We can all benefit by education, awareness campaigns and public programming of the like. There is no state-mandated education for cyclists at any age. Motorists receive almost no education after they receive their driver's license.

Many people are discouraged from riding a bicycle because they feel that motorists are not paying attention, which could endanger the cyclist.

There is a need to provide education, encouragement and enforcement that cyclists have rights and responsibilities. The city should promote motor vehicle drivers to be 100% focused on driving, i.e.

no texting, phone use, drowsy driving or while under the influence of alcohol or drugs delaying reaction time. Also, traffic calming education can pair with the traffic calming measures proposed in the Comprehensive Plan to reduce instances of aggressive driving.

Page 82 and Page 88 – Improve LANTA frequency and other transportation options

Improve bus service along 100s routes to every 10-30 minutes (currently 60 minutes) until midnight

Improve bus service along 200s routes to every 30 or 60 minutes until 8pm 7 days/wk (currently 60-120 minutes until 6pm and no service on Sundays) 200s routes' service currently ends in the middle of rush hour.

Page 91 – Northampton Street artist's rendering incorrectly shows Shared Lane Marking (SLM) symbols in bike lane. Bike lane symbol should be used instead. Indicated 8' wide on-street parking on Northampton Street will conflict with bike lane when parked cars open their doors.

Additions to Comprehensive Plan – Currently not included:

Bike Parking - Sheltered bike parking requirement for businesses with more than 10 part-time employees and housing development more than 10 units. Bike parking for employee and resident use should be covered and away from rain/snow.

Provide public restrooms in Center Square. This is an equity consideration that all people should be provided with means to take care of basic bodily needs. Consider this under THRIVE - Urban Conveniences.

Recycling/Resource Recovery – Current Easton recycling rate is 15% (??) of the waste stream, which could be improved greatly with increased participation and encouragement. Set a goal for city-wide recycling of 65% by 2035, for residential, businesses, and municipal-produced streams. This is achieved currently in many cities around the U.S., so it should be attainable for Easton within the next 20 years. High recycling/resource recovery rates are indicative of progressive and socially/ environmentally conscious cities. It will take everyone working together to conserve natural resources and reduce landfill tonnage.

Regards,

Scott Slingerland, P.E.

Director, Coalition for Appropriate Transportation (CAT)

League of American Bicyclists Cycling Instructor