



June 3, 2021

Brian Teles, Project Manager
Ronald Young, District Press Officer
PennDOT District 5-0
1002 Hamilton St
Allentown, PA 18101

Hill-to-Hill Bridge Comments for Bicycling, Pedestrians, and Trails

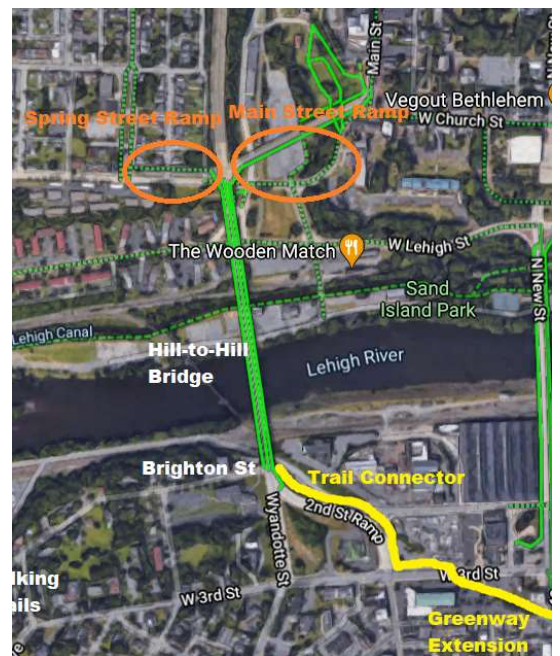
Dear Mr. Teles and Mr. Young,

CAT has reviewed PennDOT's Preliminary Engineering design alternatives through the [PennDOT virtual meeting link](#). We have found the virtual meeting presentation to be clear, informational, and of excellent quality for public viewing. We have submitted feedback through PennDOT's online forms but would like to summarize them here for formatting and clarity.

This letter covers CAT's emphasis on the importance of 10' wide sidewalks on both sides of the bridge, as well as improving trail connections on both sides of the river and enhancing pedestrian access/crosswalks from Southside to Main Street and West Bethlehem neighborhoods.

We feel that everyone can experience benefits if the final bridge design reduces vehicle crashes/speeds, tire/engine noise, and delay due to traffic congestion, while improving air quality.

Traffic Calming to Reduce Crashes - PennDOT data shows that in the last 10 years, in bridge project area, there were 245 crashes (on average, a crash every 2 weeks). Of these 104 (42%) were rear-end collisions. In observing traffic patterns, we note that southbound SR378 traffic travels at a high rate of speed and rapidly decelerates at the bridge. **Traffic calming measures for southbound SR378 starting at the Eighth Avenue ramp should be considered to achieve 25 mph vehicle speeds.** What traffic calming measures could best manage vehicle speeds between Eighth Avenue and Third Street?



The Hill-to-Hill bridge has the potential to connect neighborhoods and existing trails with widened sidewalks.

Reduce Congestion - A challenge we are posing to PennDOT traffic engineers is to design the bridge for 25mph vehicle speeds while minimizing congestion. This is likely no simple design task due to the high traffic volumes at peak times. We currently observe two extremes in traffic flow – excessively high speeds or stopped traffic. **Has PennDOT considered installing roundabouts at the Second Street ramp and W. Third St intersection?**

1. Existing Conditions

The existing 6'-0" sidewalks provide access but are cramped and awkward when pedestrian volumes are high or when bicyclists are present. Pedestrian visibility is restricted at the Brighton Street crosswalk. In the existing configuration, bicyclists should walk their bikes on the sidewalk due to tight space and low railings.

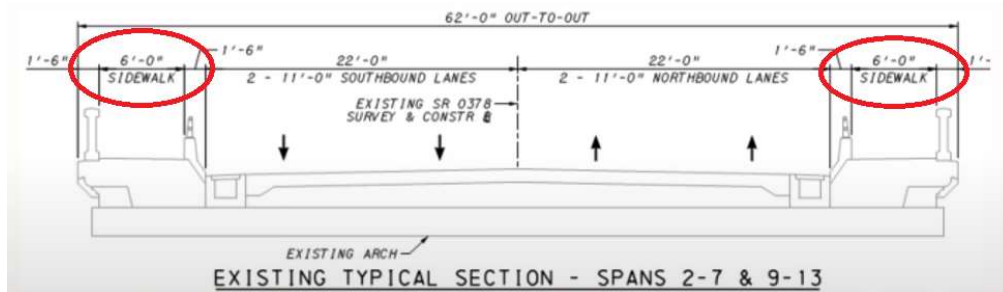


Figure 1-Existing Bridge Lane/Sidewalk Configuration (PennDOT)

2. Design Alternatives Presented by PennDOT

In our opinion, PennDOT is considering pedestrians and bicyclists quite well in many of the Design Alternatives if the considerations are retained in the final version:

- Alternative 2E extends both sidewalks from 6'-0" to 8'-10".

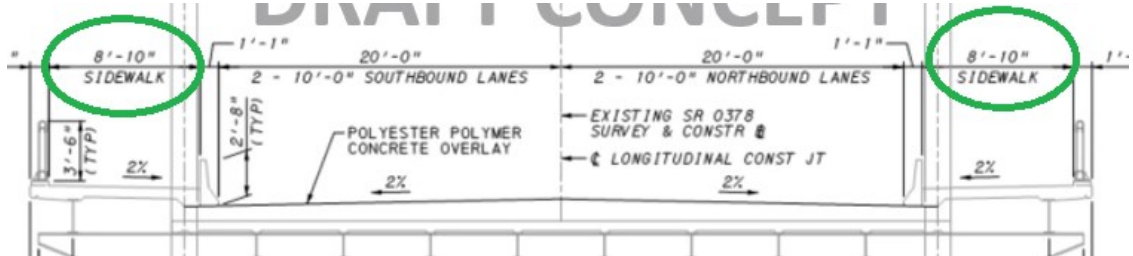


Figure 2-Design Alternative 2E

- Alternative 3B extends the eastern sidewalk from 6' to 10' which creates an excellent mixed-use path though it keeps the western sidewalk 6'-3". **CAT would like to know that if Alternative 3B is chosen, could the western sidewalk also be widened to 10'?**

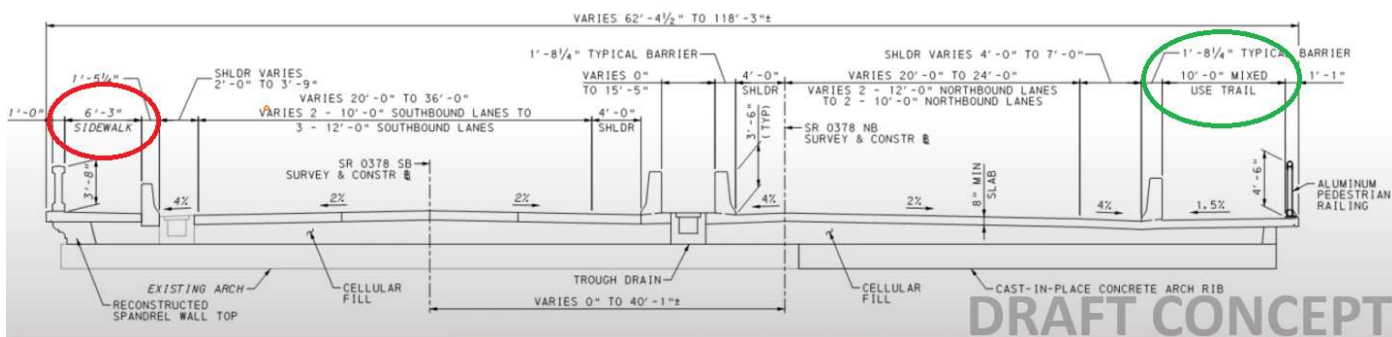


Figure 3-Design Alternative 3B

- Alternative 5B includes building an entirely new span next to the current one. expanding the 6'3" western sidewalk to 8'6" and the eastern sidewalk to 10' as a mixed-use trail. The inclusion of the 10' mixed-use trail is very appealing, though we await more detail on crosswalks, intersections, and connection to the Southside Bethlehem Greenway (more in item 4 below).

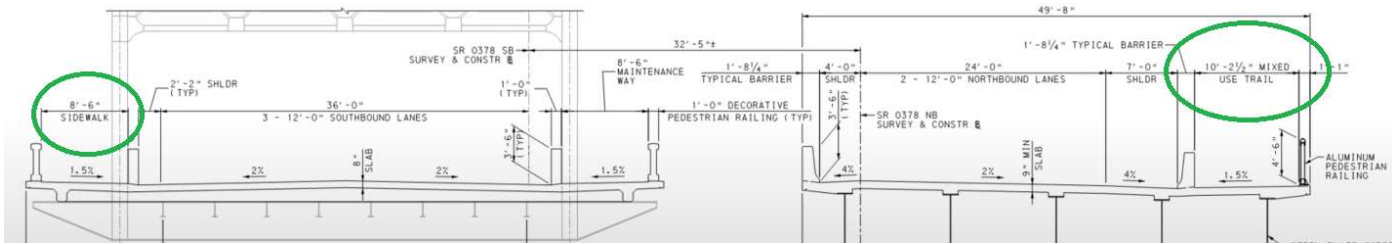


Figure 4-Design Alternative 5B

3. Eastern and Western Sidewalks are Equally Important

The western sidewalk via the Spring Street Ramp serves the entire neighborhood of west Bethlehem as well as anyone walking/bicycling west towards City of Allentown or Hanover Township. The eastern sidewalk serves the Main Street area very well, as well as northeast neighborhood Bethlehem.

Since west Bethlehem and downtown/northeast Bethlehem are somewhat divided by Route SR378 and to a lesser degree, topography, having adequate multimodal access on eastern and western sidewalks would be extremely helpful. A 10' mixed-use sidewalk path on both sides should be easily shareable between pedestrians, wheelchair users, and bicyclists.

4. South Bethlehem Greenway/D&L Sand Island Trail Connection

Another connection that would be very synergistic would be the Hill-to-Hill bridge to the Southside Bethlehem Greenway at W 3rd Street. A logical trail crossing location would be next to Comfort Suites hotel with a dedicated crosswalk. This connection might continue along the 2nd Street ramp. This would very much bolster the city of Bethlehem's trail network. People walking, rolling (wheelchair), or bicycling - from the Southside Bethlehem Greenway across the eastern sidewalk of the Hill-to-Hill Bridge could easily connect to the D&L Trail at Sand Island.

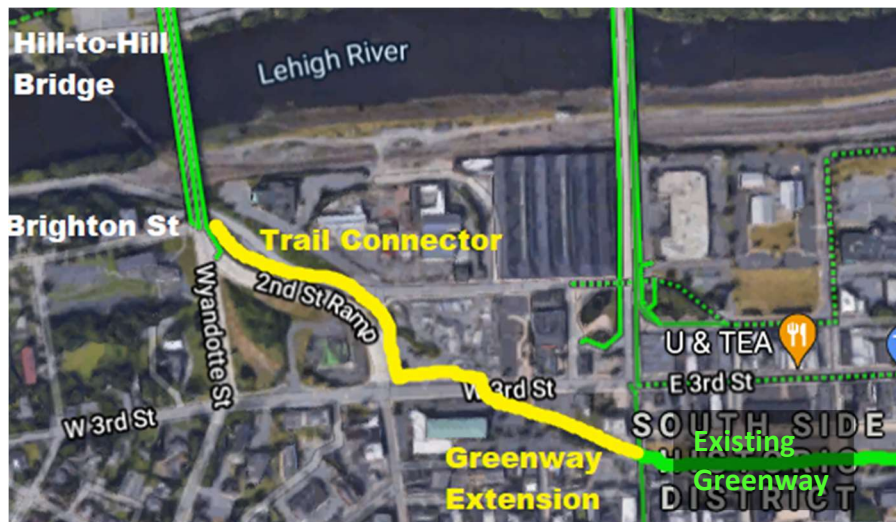


Figure 5-Potential Trail Connector to Southside Bethlehem Greenway

5. Pedestrian Crossings & Access

We are very keen to see well-signalized crosswalks at the south end of the bridge:

- SR378 @ 2nd Street ramp
- 2nd Street ramp @ SR378
- Brighton St @ SR378
- Southside Bethlehem Greenway @ 2nd St ramp

At the north end of the bridge:

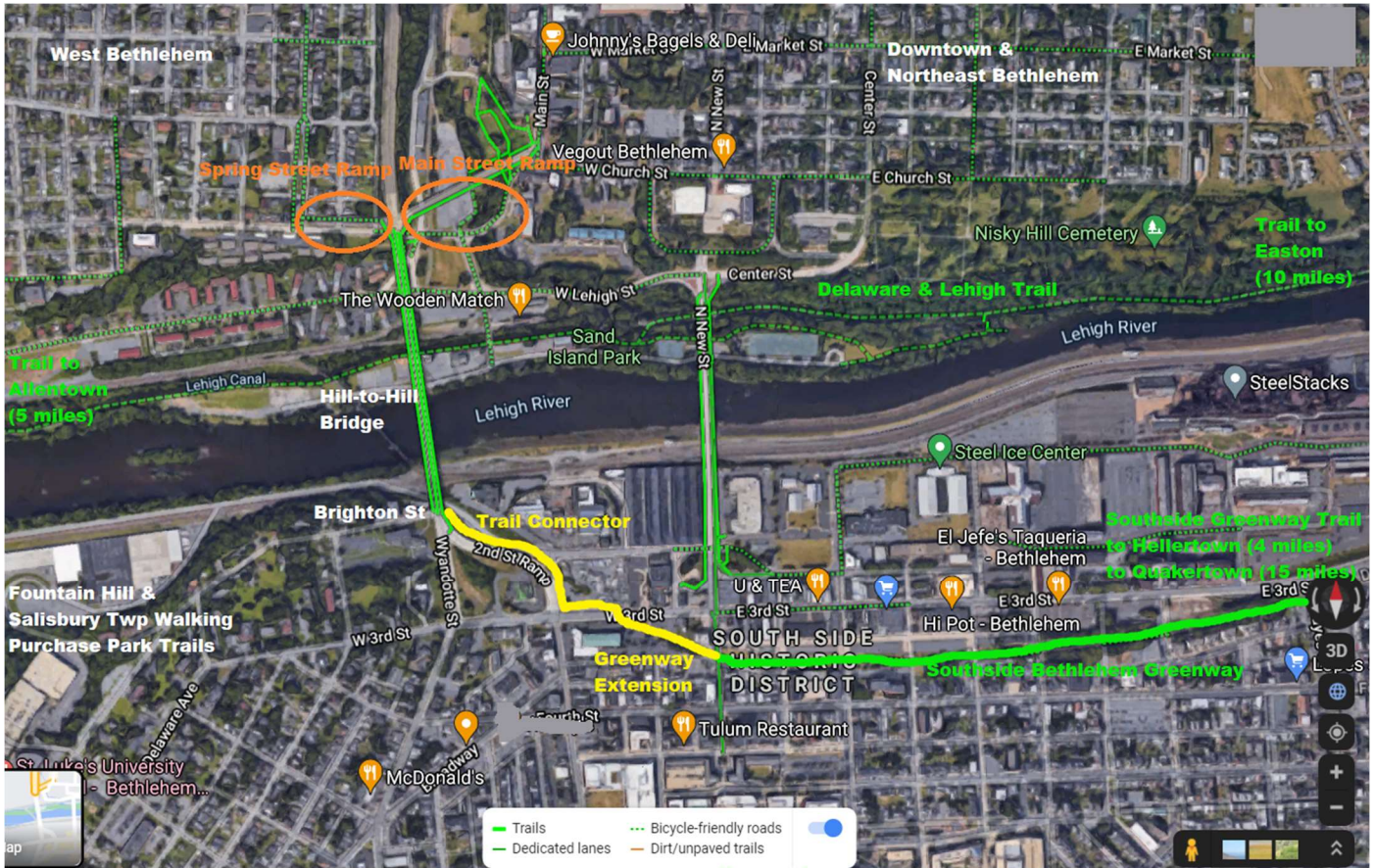
- Pedestrian access maintained at Spring St ramp
- Pedestrian access maintained at Main St ramp and stairs to Conestoga St
- Trail connection to D&L Trail @ Sand Island

6. Traffic Speeds and Congestion

Per PennDOT's Pennsylvania Crash Information Tool (PCIT) in a 300' radius of the Hill-to-Hill Bridge from Third Street to the Main Street ramp, between 2011-2020, there were 247 reportable crashes (4 with suspected serious injuries, and 64 with minor or possible injuries). On average this means a crash every 15 days over 10 years.

A challenge we are posing to PennDOT traffic engineers is to design the bridge for 25mph travel speed while minimizing congestion. Current posted speed limit is 30mph, while vehicle speeds are anecdotally either zero mph (stopped in traffic) or 50 mph (excessive). Has a spot speed study been carried out? Vehicles travelling at 25mph are less likely to have a injury/fatal crash and are much quieter for local residents, visitors, and pedestrians using the sidewalks. Has PennDOT considered utilizing roundabouts at the Second Street ramp and W 3rd St intersection?

As a side note, are improvements such as roundabouts being considered for the SR378 intersections at Fourth Street and Broadway which also has significant congestion and approximately 200 crashes in the same 10-year period? We understand that this is outside of this project scope, but likely has an effect on traffic flow in the scope area.



The Hill-to-Hill Bridge in relation to neighborhoods and trails of Bethlehem, as well as regional trails that offer long-range connections.

Thank you for considering all modes of travel in the Hill-to-Hill Bridge rehabilitation project. This is significant to connectivity for Bethlehem and the Lehigh Valley region.

Best Regards,

Scott Slingerland, P.E., LCI, Executive Director
 CAT-Coalition for Appropriate Transportation

- CC:
- Becky Bradley, Lehigh Valley Planning Commission
 - Michael Alkhal, City of Bethlehem Public Works
 - Tiffany Wells, City of Bethlehem Traffic
 - Darlene Heller, City of Bethlehem Planning Director
 - Sherri Penschisen, Bethlehem Citizens Traffic Advisory Committee
 - Jodi Evans, City of Bethlehem Recreation Director
 - Bethlehem City Council
 - CAT Board of Directors
 - Claire Sadler, Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor