

**LAUREL VALLEY**
TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROJECT



Public Officials Briefing and Public Meeting

FEBRUARY 25, 2016

PRESENTED TO:



PRESENTED BY:



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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On Thursday, February 25, 2016 a Public Officials Briefing and a Public Meeting were conducted by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) Engineering District 12-0 and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), in cooperation with Westmoreland County, to discuss the Laurel Valley Transportation Improvement Project (LVTIP) feasibility study.

The LVTIP is a comprehensive approach to identify a series of fundable, attainable, and sustainable roadway improvements to meet transportation needs on or near the existing Route 981 Corridor. The Study Area extends from Route 30 near the Arnold Palmer Regional Airport to the Route 819/981 intersection in Mount Pleasant. The study will consider transportation improvements that will enhance safety, mobility and access consistent with land use and projected future growth in the region. The LVTIP feasibility study will include consideration, from a future projected traffic standpoint, the possibility of a new PA Turnpike interchange with Route 981, as supported by Westmoreland County and currently part of a separate study of Regional Cashless Tolling by the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC).

The purpose of the meeting was to:

- Introduce the LVTIP and Feasibility Study to the general public
- Receive feedback on:
 - Draft Purpose and Needs
 - Preliminary Performance Measures
 - Environmental and Engineering Constraints
 - Engineering and Traffic Analyses
 - Local Knowledge of the project area

The public officials and general public meetings were held on the same day, February 25, and at the same location, Pleasant Unity Fire Hall. Twelve (12) public officials attended the Public Officials Briefing and one hundred nine (109) people registered at the Public Meeting. A brief PowerPoint presentation was conducted during both meetings. Attendees were encouraged to visit each of the seven (7) display stations and talk one-on-one with study team members who were located throughout the display area.

The informational display stations included:

- Study Overview
- Draft Purpose and Needs and Preliminary Performance measures
- Environmental Considerations
- Engineering Considerations
- Future SR 981 Roadway Typical Section
- Public Involvement To-Date

II. MEETING FORMAT

PUBLIC OFFICIALS BRIEFING

Date: Thursday, February 25, 2016
Time: 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Location: Pleasant Unity Fire Hall
135 John George Street
Pleasant Unity, PA 15676

PUBLIC MEETING

Date: Thursday, February 25, 2016
Time: 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
Presentation at 5:30 p.m.
Location: Pleasant Unity Fire Hall
135 John George Street
Pleasant Unity, PA 15676

Format: Open House Plans Display with one brief presentation at 5:30 p.m.

Purpose: The purpose of the meeting was to:

- Introduce the LVTIP and Feasibility Study to the general public
- Receive feedback on:
 - Draft Purpose and Needs
 - Preliminary Performance Measures
 - Environmental and Engineering Constraints
 - Engineering and Traffic Analyses
 - Local Knowledge of the project area

Notices:

- A notification was posted on the project website three weeks (February 4, 2016) before the Public Meeting.
- Letters were mailed to Public Officials to invite them to the Public Officials Briefing and the Open House Plans Display.
- A follow up email blast was sent to Key Stakeholders (KeyS) Committee members and members of the general public presently on the general contact list one week before the meeting.
- A press release was issued by the PennDOT District 12-0 Community Relations Coordinator.
- A newspaper advertisement was placed in the Greensburg Tribune Review, and ran twice, February 18 and 22, 2016.

Handouts: Informational Handout and Comment Form

Attendance: Twelve (12) public officials attended the Public Officials Briefing and one hundred nine (109) people registered at the Public Meeting. In addition, the following Study Team members were also in attendance:

PennDOT

Joe Szczur, P.E., District Executive

Rachel Duda, P.E., Asst. District Executive - Design

Bill Beaumariage, P.E., District Portfolio Manager

Troy Pitts, Project Manager

Valerie Petersen, District Community Relations Coordinator

Kim Ansell, District Environmental Manager

Mary Hadden, Assistant Environmental Engineer

Frank Domenico, Right-of-Way Unit

Federal Highway Administration

Jonathan Crum, Federal Highway Administration

McCormick Taylor

John Petulla, P.E., Project Manager

Dawn (Noel) Schilling, P.E., Feasibility Study Manager

Ken Rich, Public Involvement Coordinator

Dana Sklack, Public Involvement Specialist

III. MEETING DETAILS

Both the Public Officials Briefing and the Public Meeting were held at the Pleasant Unity Fire Hall and were structured as an open house format with brief presentations. The Public Officials Briefing began with the PowerPoint presentation and then attendees were encouraged to view the stations set up around the hall and speak with team members one-on-one. The Public Meeting began at 5:00 p.m. and attendees were encouraged to view the seven stations placed around the room. A brief PowerPoint Presentation was given at 5:30 p.m.

OPEN HOUSE AREA

Listed below is each station with a brief description of all displays.

Station 1: Registration and Introduction	Registration
	Welcome Board
	Informational Handout
	Comment Form
Station 2: Study Overview	Feasibility Work Plan Board
	Study Area Map Board
Station 3: Draft Purpose and Needs and Preliminary Performance Measures	Draft Purpose and Needs Board
	Preliminary Performance Measures Board
Station 4: Environmental Considerations	Table top mapping of Environmental Features within the corridor
Station 5: Engineering Considerations	Table top mapping of Roadway Deficiencies within the corridor
	Conceptual Typical Section Board
	Existing and Future Average Daily Traffic (ADT) Volumes Board
	2015 and 2040 Level of Service Board
	What is Level of Service Board
	Safety Concern Mapping of Key Areas Board
	Travel Times from the PA Turnpike Board
Station 6: Public Involvement	Key Stakeholder Committee and Website Overview Board
Station 7: Comment Area	Comment Board

IV. PRESENTATION SUMMARY & PUBLIC OFFICIALS FEEDBACK

The following is a summary of the presentation to Public Officials:

1. Joseph Szczur, P.E., PennDOT District 12-0 District Executive, opened the presentation by welcoming the public officials. He then introduced the study team from PennDOT and McCormick Taylor. Mr. Szczur reviewed the project's goals and asked Chris Bova, Westmoreland County Planning and Development, to say a few words.
2. Mr. Bova said the project is one of the county's top priorities and has been around in some form since 1973.
3. Ken Rich, of McCormick Taylor, identified key study team members and their contact information. Mr. Rich also explained the ways in which attendees may complete their comment forms (paper format at the public meeting or by mail, or online via smart phone at the public meeting or at home).
4. Dawn (Noel) Schilling, P.E., of McCormick Taylor, reviewed the Feasibility Study work plan and the study area map before briefly reviewing the Draft Purpose and Needs, and the Preliminary Performance Measures. Ms. Schilling also reviewed the environmental information previously gathered by Michael Baker.
5. John Petulla, P.E., of McCormick Taylor, reviewed the traffic data collected, safety concerns, and engineering constraints currently identified within the study area.
6. Mr. Rich concluded the presentation by reviewing the public involvement to date and the project website.
7. The following questions were then asked by attendees:

Q: Is the study's purpose to accommodate future traffic?

A: Part of the study's purpose is to accommodate future traffic, but other goals include accommodating truck traffic; improving safety and access; and integrating land use throughout the corridor.

Q: What are the 981/2023 options?

A: The study will consider improvements along portions of both Route 981 and Route 2023.

Q: Will there be an impact study for traffic effects to local communities?

A: Sustainability standards will be applied against all potential solutions in the corridor. The FHWA online INVEST tool will be used to measure overall effectiveness. Directional Signage to the county fairgrounds and businesses will also be considered. Also, a betterment project is also being considered to improve the connection between Route 119 and Route 981 in Mount Pleasant, separately from this study.

Q: Is the existing Right-of-Way enough for the proposed typical section?

A: Most likely, additional land will need to be acquired. The extent of right-of-way effects will not be known until after solutions are identified.

V. INFORMATION GATHERED

In addition to the questions asked at the end of the Public Officials Briefing, comments were collected by study team members during the Public Meeting and everyone in attendance at both meetings were asked to complete a comment form either in person, electronically or to mail the form after the meeting. Comments were also gathered on two sets of table-top maps – Environmental Features and Substandard Roadway Features.

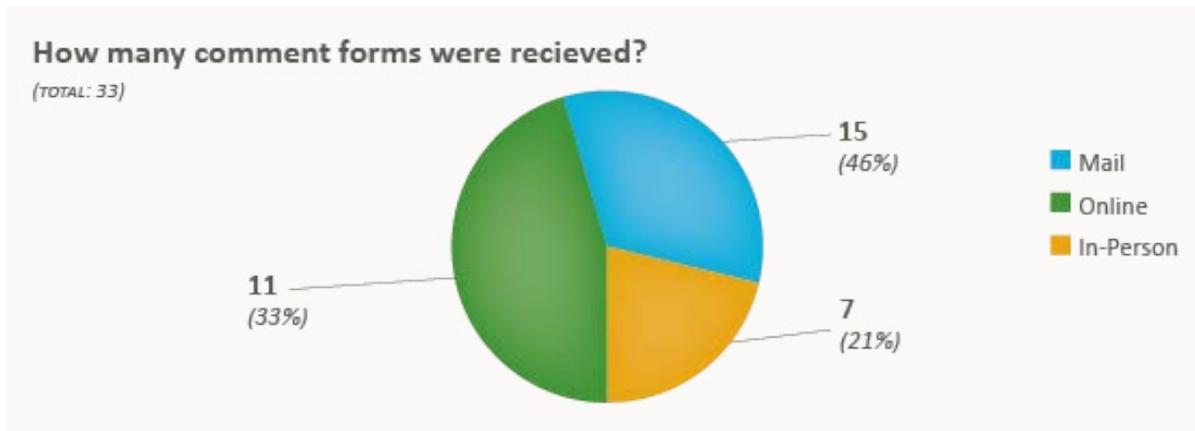
PUBLIC MEETING COMMENTS

The following comments were provided by attendees and noted by Study Team members during one-to-one conversations.

- An attendee requested that Route 30 and Route 119 have signals better coordinated and then update the study before presenting to the public.
- Ardi Hill (Pleasant Unity, PA) asked for the study team to find a way to go around Pleasant Unity.
- Gary Klosky (Hostetter, PA) is very much in favor of the Turnpike interchange.
- Scott Kennedy (Latrobe, PA) is in favor of this project.

COMMENT FORM SUMMARY

A total of 33 completed comment forms were received through March 15, 2016. Comment forms were available in paper and online forms.



The most common form of response was by mail.

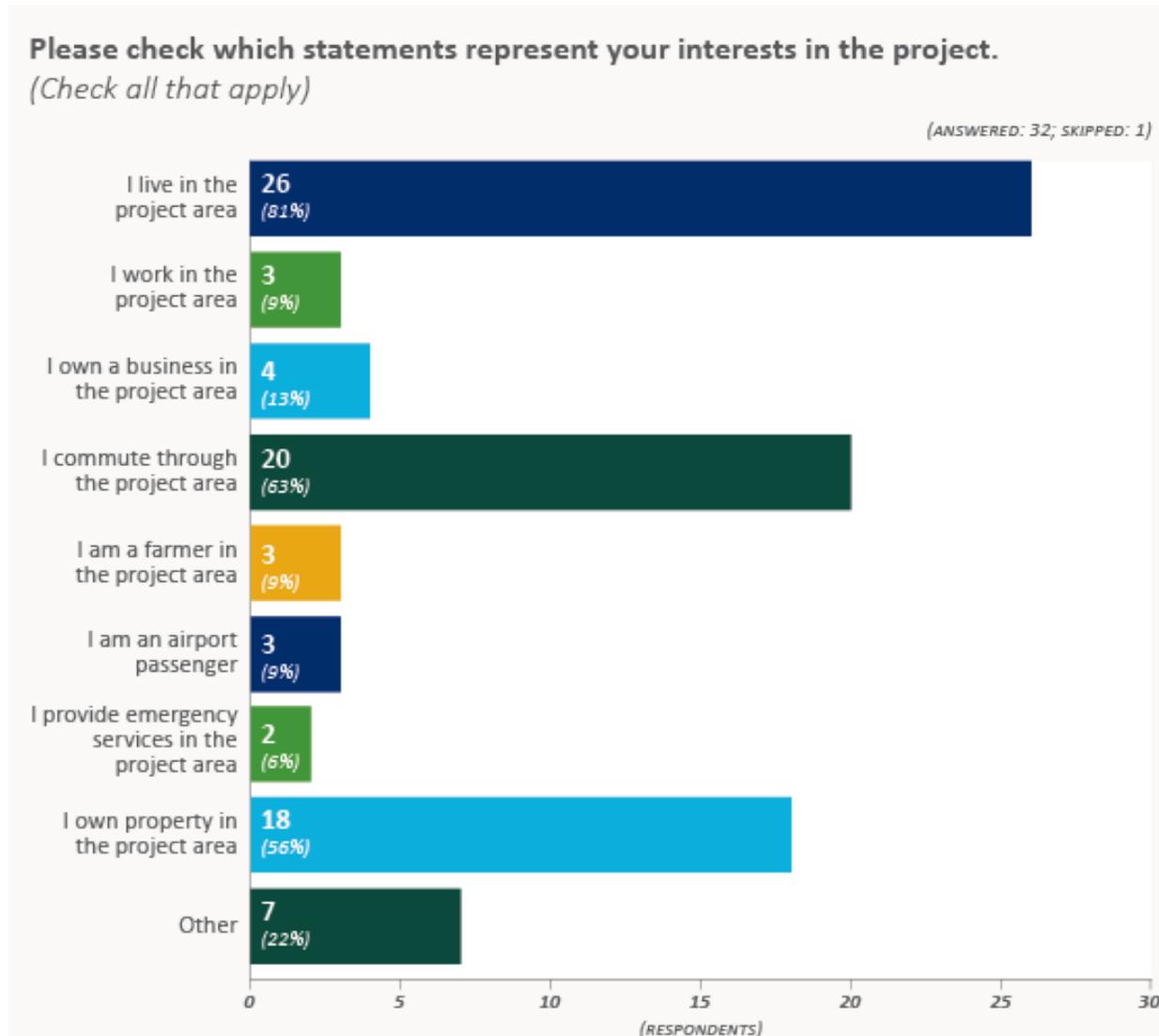
The comment form was broken into seven (7) sections to reflect the seven (7) stations at the Public Meeting.

Station 1 Feedback

Station 1 asked participants to introduce themselves to the project team. Thirty-two (32) of the respondents included their contact information and were added to the project contact list. This list will be used to inform the public about future meetings and opportunities to further comment on the project.

Station 2 Feedback

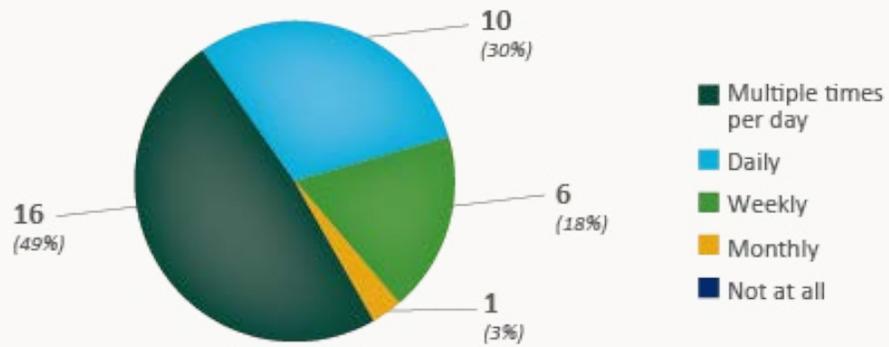
The questions for station 2 asked respondents about why they are interested in the project and how often they travel the study area.



Twenty-six (26) of the thirty-three (33) respondents identified themselves as residents in the study area. The second and third most common interest groups identified were commuters through the study area and property owners. Of the seven (7) respondents who selected 'other', three (3) identified the close proximity of either their home or a relative's home to Route 981. Three (3) other respondents identified themselves as being a part of an organization that works with the community in the project area. The seventh and final comment identified drainage issues in the project area.

How often do you travel within the Study Area?

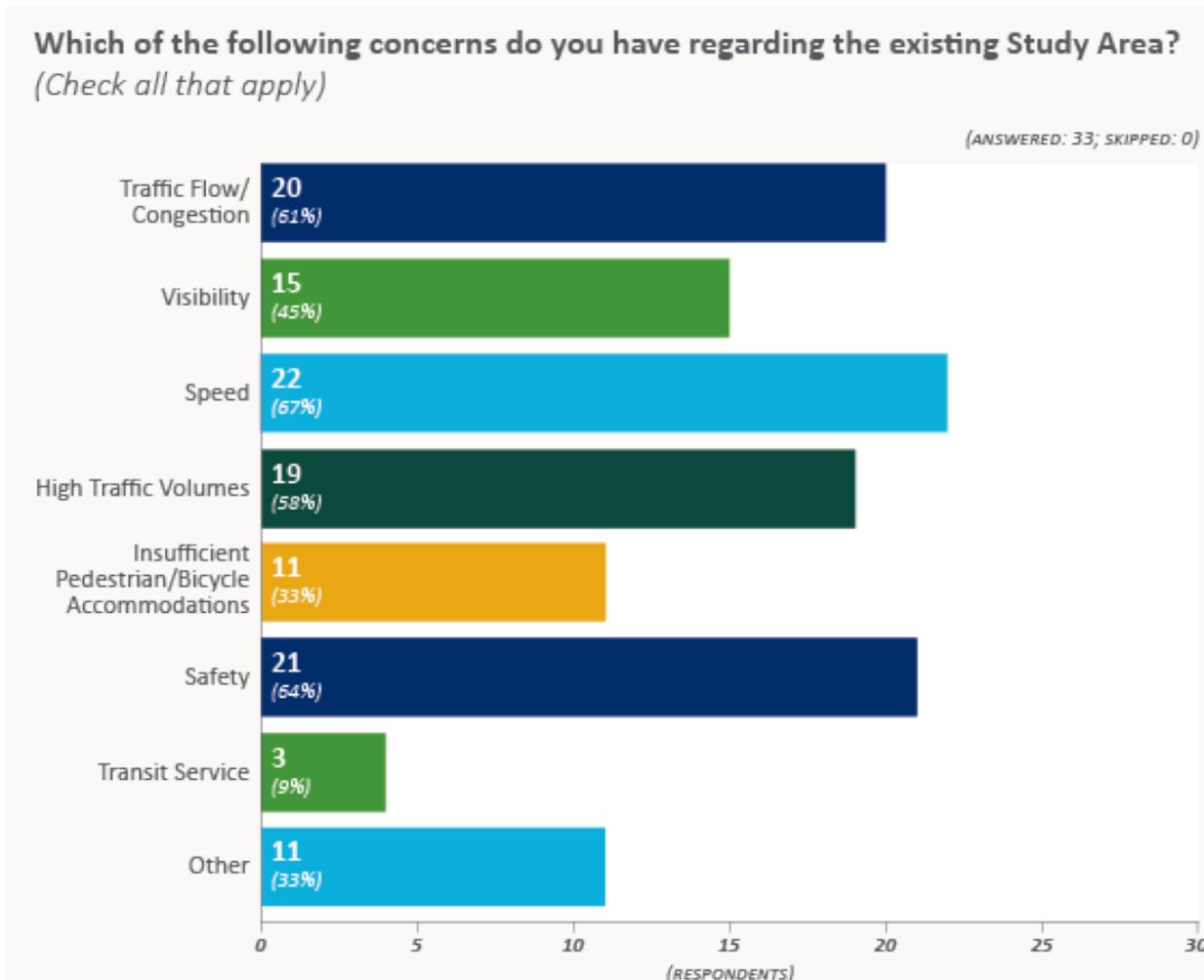
(ANSWERED: 33; SKIPPED: 0)



Nearly 80 percent of the respondents travel through the corridor at least once a day. The remaining 20 percent of respondents travel through the corridor either weekly or monthly. None of the respondents said that they never travel through the corridor.

Station 3 Feedback

The questions under station 3 relate to existing concerns in the study area and other local roads such as Routes 30, 711, and 119.



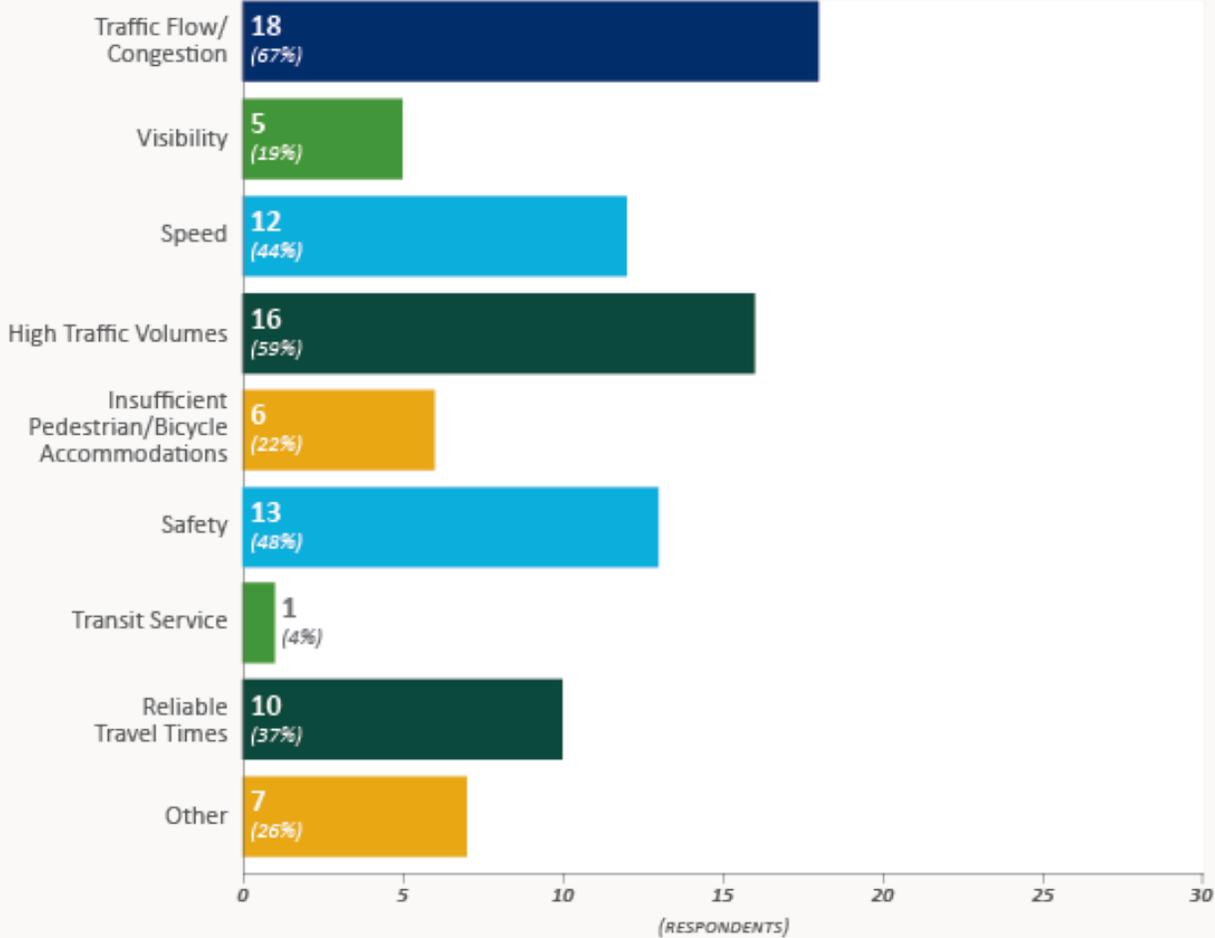
The top concerns for the respondents were speed, safety, traffic flow and congestion, and high traffic volumes in the study area.

Additional concerns identified by the eleven (11) respondents who chose 'other' included concerns about increased traffic (2 comments), noise (3 comments), local traffic access (3 comments), pollution (2 comments), property impacts (3 comments), increased use of Route 819 (1 comment), storm water runoff (1 comment), local connections (2 comments), and roadway geometry (1 comment).

Which of the following concerns do you have regarding the existing alternate routes, such as Routes 30, 711, or 119?

(Check all that apply)

(ANSWERED: 27; SKIPPED: 6)



The most common concerns for Routes 30, 711, and 119 were traffic flow and congestion and high traffic volumes.

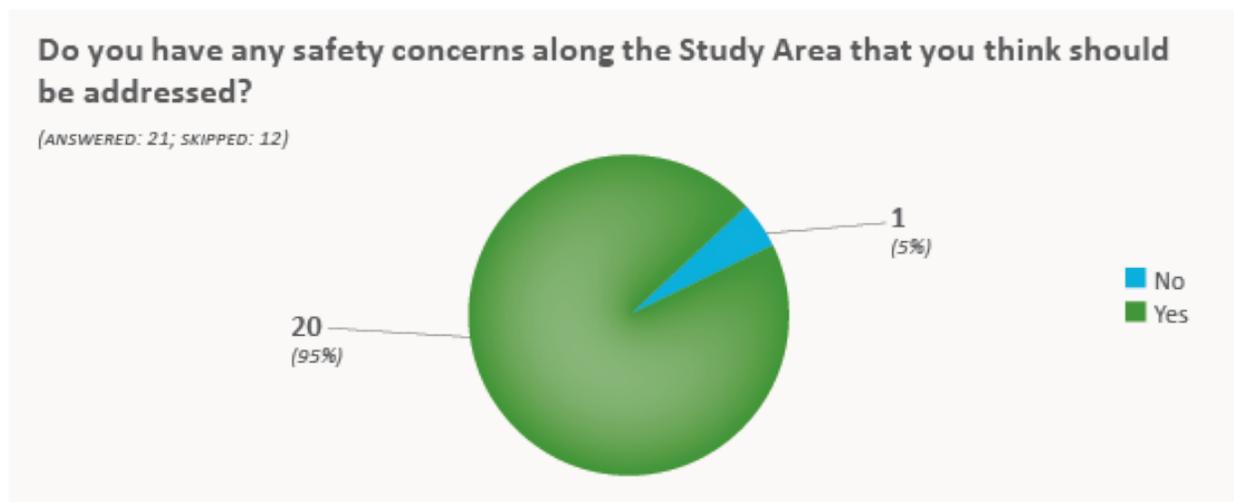
Of the seven (7) respondents who selected 'other', four (4) of the respondents said that they had no concerns about Route 30, 711, or 119. One respondent identified Routes 30 and 119 as being too busy.

Station 4 Feedback

Station 4 asked respondents if there were any sensitive features in the study area that have not been identified by the study team so far. Twelve (12) comments were received in this section. A common theme among some of the comments was a concern about personal property and environmental impacts that would be caused by increasing traffic on Route 981. Two respondents expressed concern about St. Stanislaus Church and Cemetery and St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church and Cemetery, both located close to Route 2023. Additionally, one respondent identified a drainage issue north of the Route 981/819 intersection.

Station 5 Feedback

The fifth section and station focused on safety concerns and desired outcomes for the study.

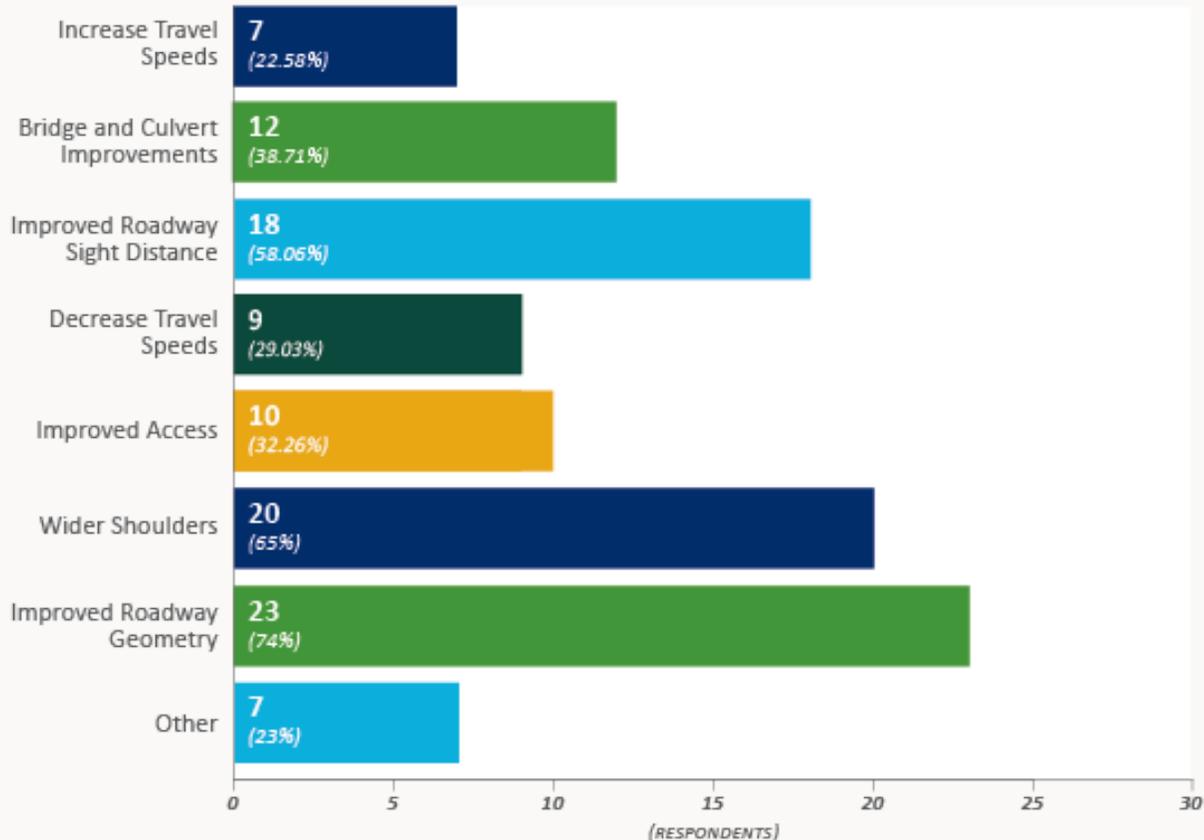


All 20 respondents provided comments on what they identified as safety concerns along the study area. Comment theme that appeared included the following concerns:

- storm water run-off (2 comments)
- roadway surface, curves and narrow roadway (4 comments)
- speeding throughout the corridor (6 comments)
- no shoulder area for bicyclists and joggers (2 comments)
- emergency service access (1 comment)
- hazardous material transportation through the area (1 comment)
- poor sight distance at the triangle intersection of Route 981 and route 130 in Pleasant Unity (1 comment)
- Farm equipment being moved along Route 981 (1 comment)

What are your desired outcomes for transportation improvements in the Study Area? (Select all that apply)

(ANSWERED: 31; SKIPPED: 2)

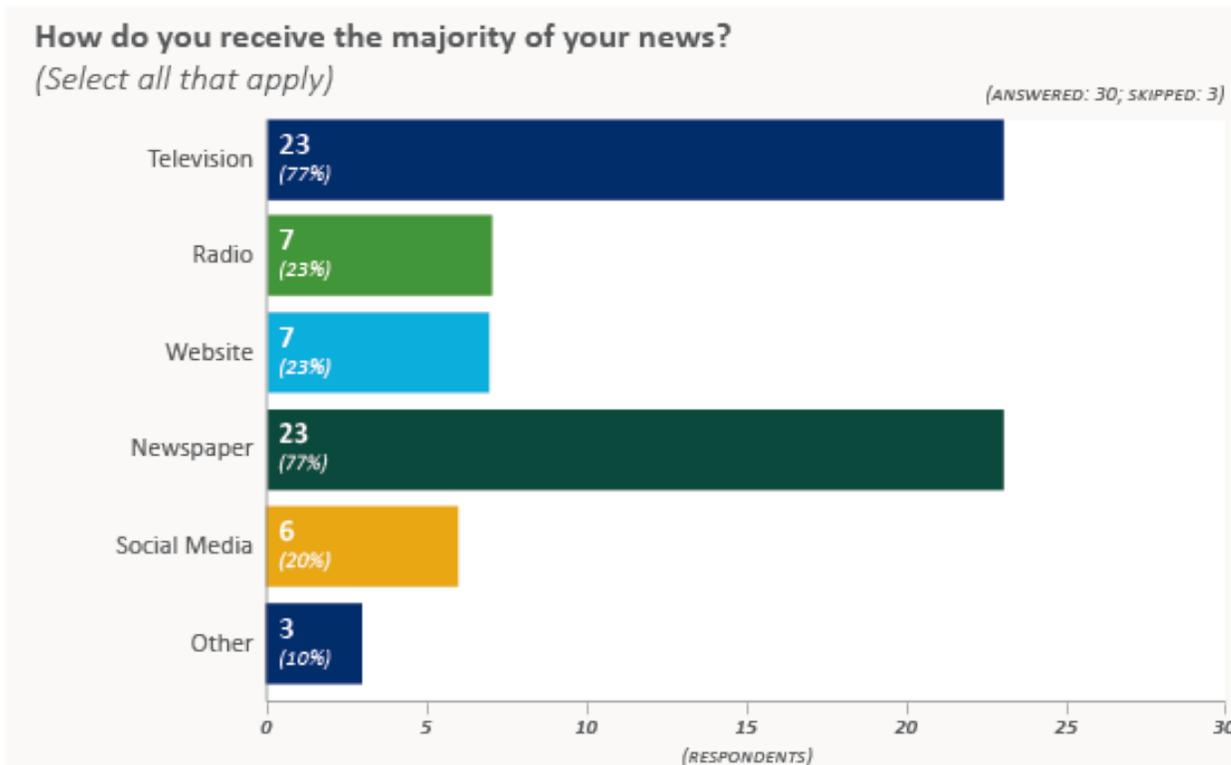


The most popular desired outcomes identified by respondents were improved roadway geometry, wider shoulders, and improved roadway sight distance.

Of the seven (7) respondents who selected 'other', four respondents expressed that they would prefer that the project not happen because they are worried about increased traffic in their area. The other three comments addressed a concern about drainage, safety for people walking and biking in Pleasant Unity, and improving the connection between area businesses with the airport, the PA Turnpike and New Stanton.

Station 6 feedback

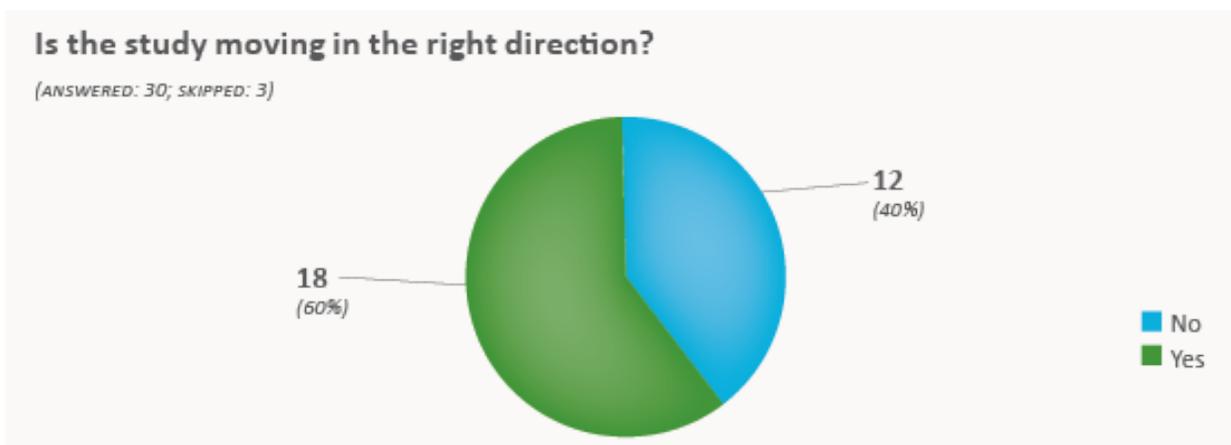
Station 6's question focused on how respondents receive a majority of their news. This question was asked to help the study team better understand their audience and to make sure that all parts of the community are being informed about the project's progress.



Most respondents receive their news via newspaper (more specifically the Tribune Review) and television.

Station 7 Feedback

The final part of the Comment Form offered the opportunity to provide general comments and to ask if the study is moving in the right direction.



Nine (9) of the twelve (12) respondents who said 'no' to the question about the direction of the project provided comments on why. Of those eight 6 respondents do not support the project at all. Some of the respondents were concerned with safety if additional traffic is introduced in the study area. Additionally, others think the project is unnecessary (3 comments). One respondent suggested looking at the 'streetcar Right-of-Way' from Novelt to Calumet to Pleasant Unity.

The last question on the comment form asked respondents for any additional feedback they had to provide. Twenty-one (21) of the 33 respondents included additional comments.

Common themes emerged in the responses.

Eight (8) of the responses were positive and fully in favor of the project. Two of the eight comments expressed excitement in moving the project along as fast as possible. Two other comments were in strong support of the turnpike interchange being added near the southern end of the study area.

The second theme in the responses was a concern about speed and safety throughout the study area. These comments ranged from being concerned about their personal property to feeling unsafe with the speeds drivers use on the road. Additionally, the common theme of diverting traffic from Pleasant Unity was also a part of these responses. Residents are concerned that improvements along the existing corridor would negatively impact homes in Pleasant Unity. Two of the five responses were not only concerned about speed and safety, but were also strongly opposed to improvements along the current route 981.

The remaining responses included what funding sources would be used (1 comment), bringing economic development to the area (2 comments), and improvement recommendations for locations to go off alignment (2 comments).

VI. CONCLUSION

All meeting activities were concluded at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, February 25, 2016. This summary provides an accurate description of activities associated with the Public Officials Briefing and the Public Meeting and the information shared and feedback received. Anyone having additional or clarifying information should notify McCormick Taylor by April 15, 2016, otherwise this summary will be considered final.

*Dana Sklack
Public Involvement Coordinator*

*Kenneth V. Rich
Senior Public Involvement Specialist*



*1000 Omega Drive, Suite 1550
Pittsburgh, PA 15205
P: 412.922.6880
F: 412.922.6851
www.mccormicktaylor.com*