

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MERION

Building & Planning Committee

Issue Briefing

Topic: Transportation Demand Management Policy

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I. Action To Be Considered By The Board:

Adoption of a resolution establishing a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Policy drafted in cooperation with the Greater Valley Forge Transportation Management Association (GVF).

II. Why This Issue Requires Board Consideration:

A new policy is subject to the approval of the Board of Commissioners.

III. Current Policy Or Practice (If Applicable):

The 2016 Comprehensive Plan recommends the expansion of multi-modal transportation options, including the expansion of transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The adoption of a TDM policy advances several of the recommendations from the Circulation Element of the Comprehensive Plan to reduce congestion and the number of single-occupant vehicle trips and to improve access to multiple modes of transportation.

IV. Other Relevant Background Information:

In 2018 the Township and GVF were awarded a TCDI grant by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) to develop a TDM policy that could serve as a model for other suburban communities in the region. The grant deadline for reimbursable expenses to produce an adopted TDM policy is June 30, 2020.

TDM focuses on helping people change their travel behavior—to meet their travel needs by using different modes, traveling at different times, making fewer trips or shorter trips, or taking different routes.¹ The ultimate goal is to reduce traffic congestion, which is one of the most frequently cited issues negatively impacting the quality of life for Lower Merion residents.

The frustration with traffic congestion is well-founded. Although the Township is well-served by transit routes, the DVRPC's 2019 *Congestion Management Process (CMP)* identified four major routes in and around the Township as "Congested Corridors", including: I-76, I-476, Route 1, and Route 30. Additionally, the CMP identified several roads in the Township as having a high travel time index, including Montgomery Avenue, Haverford Road, Conshohocken State Road,

¹ The Center for Urban Transportation Research, University of South Florida

Rock Hill Road, and Belmont Avenue. The CMP lists TDM as a congestion mitigation strategy in these areas.

The Township partnered with GVF to advance TDM in Lower Merion using the TCDI grant to develop this TDM Policy. In April 2019, GVF presented an overview of TDM strategies to the Planning Commission. GVF then crafted a TDM Policy that was tailored to Lower Merion Township. Drafting of this TDM policy was nearly complete as the Pandemic swept the nation affecting how all U.S. residents live, work and play.

The TDM policy was initially proposed to be introduced with an ordinance to require employers take part in implementing TDM strategies. Considering the current economic situation, the focus of the draft ordinance shifted towards incentivizing TDM plans in the zoning districts with the greatest development potential through parking reductions and traffic impact fee credits.

The draft ordinance focused on the City Avenue District, the Rock Hill Road District, the Medical Center District, which includes the Lankenau Hospital Campus, and the Bryn Mawr Medical District. Given the significant shift in travel behavior and employment trends staff felt it was premature to bring the ordinance forward at this time. For that reason, the discussion will focus on the TDM Policy.

Lower Merion Township will encourage businesses to voluntarily implement the TDM Policy and will take an active role in advancing the strategies in the coming years through capital projects, regulatory tools, and public engagement efforts.

The TDM Policy is designed to achieve the following goals:

1. Reduce AM and PM peak period trips at key intersections.
2. Increase the amount of 'saved' vehicle miles traveled (VMT).
3. Achieve a 15-20% mode shift based on employees taking a TDM alternative such as, cycling, carpooling, vanpooling, teleworking or transit.
4. Expand bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.
5. Increase public outreach efforts to promote multi-modal transportation.

The TDM Policy states that the Township will track the progress of the implementation of this policy on a biennial basis. Adopting this policy is an important step in memorializing the Township's stance on advancing TDM strategies to reduce traffic congestion. Maureen Farrell, Deputy Executive Director of GVF will provide the attached presentation at the upcoming meeting.

The Planning Commission recommended the adoption of the TDM Policy at their virtual Zoom meeting on June 1, 2020. The goal to reduce peak period trips at key intersections was a point of deliberation. Some discussion centered on revising the goal to instead improve the level of service at those intersections. Staff warned that improving the level of service could bear the unintended consequences of widening the roadways thereby changing the character, and result in higher Township costs for an engineering analysis to evaluate the level of service. Staff acknowledged that the reduction in peak period trips may be more aspirational than finite,

especially in light of pass-through traffic, but it provides a benchmark for which to strive. The Planning Commission was generally supportive of the overall TDM Policy.

V. Impact on Township Finances:

The biennial review of the progress of the implementation of this policy will be conducted by the Lower Merion Township Building & Planning Department. The LMPD Traffic Safety Unit may be requested to take counts at identified intersections on a biennial basis. There will be a nominal impact on Township finances.

VI. Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends the Board of Commissioners adopt the proposed TDM Policy. It advances several recommendations of the Township's 2016 Comprehensive Plan and the goals of the DVRPC Long-Range Plan (2015 to 2045).