

Church Road: Greenwood Avenue to Rices Mill Road Improvements Project
April 4, 2019 Open House Comment Response Document
Prepared May 2, 2019

This Comment Response Document was prepared to respond to comments received during the public open house and those comments received by May 2, 2019.

Questions 1 – 5 Summary

Responses to questions 1 through 5 were tallied and are summarized below:

Question 1. Please indicate your interest in the project (check all that apply).

- I own property in the project area. Total = 17
- I am a resident in the project area. Total = 23
- I commute to work or school through the project area. Total = 11
- I am a member of an Emergency Service provider. Total = 0
- Other. Total = 8, including “Township Commissioner; Cheltenham School District Transportation Supervisor; I own and live downhill from the project; I am part of the Cheltenham Environmental Advisory Committee; I enjoy walking in Curtis park; I am a resident affected by the project; lived in Cheltenham since 1966; and Elected Public Leader”

Question 2. How often do you travel through the Church Road and Greenwood Avenue intersection?

- Multiple times a day. Total = 9
- Once or twice a day. Total = 8
- A few times a week. Total = 14
- Rarely. Total = 2 (with comments that this is due to congestion)
- Not at all. Total = 0

Question 3. How did you find out about tonight’s meeting?

- Local newspaper. Total = 0
- Direct mail flyer. Total = 8
- Neighbors, friends, family. Total = 13
- Other. Total = 17 (including “township web site, school district central office, Cheltenham Township facebook page, Cheltenham Chamber of Citizens, Friends of Curtis Arboretum, township email, EAC notice, and did not attend as was inadequately advertised”)

Question 4. Do you have a better understanding of the purpose of the project and the objectives of the project after attending the open house?

- Yes. Total = 21
- No. Total = 9 (one with comment that the purpose and objectives were already known, and one that little or no information from PennDOT; all information came from other sources)

Question 5. With the measures incorporated into the project (i.e., sidewalk, crosswalks), do you envision you/your family utilizing the sidewalks to access the elementary school, college, and/or Arboretum?

- Yes. Total = 19
- No. Total = 11 (with comments including no proposed sidewalks from Spruce Lane/Randall Road; with wider roads, more traffic and higher speeds, it will become an undesirable place to visit; proposed design will not encourage me to walk there especially with proposed traffic island instead of traffic signal regulated crosswalk; proposed plan needs revision, right turn lanes and concrete islands are unsafe)

Questions 6 and 7 Summary

The following summarizes the comments received as part of responses to Questions 6 and 7, specific to what information could PennDOT provide to better inform the attendee of the project, as well as general comments regarding the project.

COMMENTER: Rep. Steve McCarter, 211 W. Waverly Road, Glenside, PA 19038

COMMENT #1: “The two lane merge on Church going east is a really dangerous design flaw and needs re-thinking. Also, the loss of the 17 trees is also a serious problem in the era of climate change.”

RESPONSE #1: The project engineer, WSP, is currently reevaluating the traffic model based on the most current traffic data available. The results of this will be discussed with the PennDOT Traffic Unit, and a meeting with Cheltenham Township representatives, Montgomery County, and Representative McCarter will be scheduled to discuss the results of the updated model.

Widening of the intersection to accommodate turning lanes is necessary to alleviate the current traffic congestion issues. The traffic signals at Rices Mill Road and Greenwood Avenue will be interconnected. We understand your concerns regarding the number of trees required to be removed by the project. The Church Road Improvement Project will directly impact 17 trees, and PennDOT will be planting new trees as part of this project. The Curtis Arboretum: Conservation & Landscape Management Plan (Summer 2016) includes recommendations for 1-foot caliper replacement trees of particular native species to be planted along the perimeter of the project area once road construction is complete. These are large trees that will serve to soften the visual effect of adjacent traffic. Cheltenham Township adopted the Arboretum Master Plan in 2016 and will be responsible for ensuring that the Plan’s recommendations are followed. This includes recommendations for the size, species, and placement of new perimeter trees.

COMMENTER: Township Commissioner (indicated under Question 1; no other contact information provided)

COMMENT #2: “Very concerned this study was done without looking into account the large number of school buses that use both of these roads. Still seems un-safe for walkers. How safe will it be to enter/exit as a driver Curtis Park?”

RESPONSE #2: The geometry of the intersection was designed to accommodate bus movements. The traffic analysis was based on traffic counts performed during the school year that would be indicative of school bus usage. See response to Comment #1.

To address the “still seems un-safe for walkers” comment, public safety is a priority for PennDOT. Cheltenham Township requested that a continuous sidewalk be constructed on the northern side of Church Road. This sidewalk has been incorporated into the roadway project. The sidewalk will extend from the Rices Mill Road and Church Road intersection to the Church Road and Greenwood Avenue intersection. Pedestrian crossings will be limited to the north side of Church Road at the Greenwood Avenue intersection. There will be a pedestrian island constructed within this intersection to decrease crossing distances and aid in a safe pedestrian crossing. There will be pedestrian crosswalk markings and pedestrian signals at both intersections. Pedestrian crossing phases will be activated via pedestrian push buttons. “No Turn on Red” signs will be added at Church Road and Rices Mill Road. “No Pedestrian Crossing” signs will be added at Church Road and Greenwood Avenue where crossings are not being provided. Portions of the existing sidewalk adjacent to the college property on Greenwood Avenue will be reconstructed as part of the project. The Curtis Arboretum: Conservation & Landscape Management Plan (Summer 2016) mentions that an internal trail network will be created on the Arboretum property. In consultation with the township, this roadway project will keep an opening of the reconstructed stone wall at the corner of the at the corner of the Greenwood Avenue and Church Road intersection for a future trail connection. This project will also include a crosswalk, pedestrian signal, and ADA curb ramps for the crossing to this corner; however, any future trail work will not be the responsibility of PennDOT.

COMMENTER: Jim Custer

COMMENT #3: “How does a 40 foot long bus navigate: 1) left turn lanes, 2) right turn lanes, and 3) two lane to one lane merge on east bound Church Road? As a resident, why is the entrance to Curtis Arboretum not being widened to two lanes, and have the second lane eastbound merge after passing the entrance?”

RESPONSE #3: To address the school bus concerns, see response to Comments #1 and #2.

Widening the Arboretum driveway is beyond the scope of this project. The widening of the Arboretum driveway to two lanes is the responsibility of Cheltenham Township. Concerns regarding the merge condition in the eastbound direction are being evaluated as described in the response to Comment #1.

COMMENTER: Maytheir Aye, 201 Royal Avenue

COMMENT #4: “Thank you for thinking of including sidewalks on the project. This will make some safety concerns for college/local colleges a bit safer for students.”

RESPONSE #4: Thank you for your comment.

COMMENTER: Roberta Muse, 1309 Spruce Lane, Wyncote, PA 19095

COMMENT #5: “Spruce Lane is a cul de sac opening onto Greenwood Ave. It takes forever for us to turn onto Greenwood Ave from our street. ‘Yield’ signs or something would be helpful.”

RESPONSE #5: Thank you for your comment. Spruce Lane is not a state-owned roadway; therefore, PennDOT does not have jurisdiction of this road. However, the design team will evaluate the effectiveness of a “Do Not Block Intersection” sign as well as pavement markings at the Spruce Lane and Greenwood Avenue intersection.

COMMENTER: No contact information provided.

COMMENT #6: “Consider cut through behind Home Depot in detour plans. This may be the route Waze gives drivers to 309 from the east. There may be latent demand that is unlocked by adding capacity to the intersection during peak hours. I avoid at certain times of day.”

RESPONSE #6: Detour routes for state owned roadways are required to utilize other state-owned roadways. Using local/neighborhood streets is prohibited from being signed as a detour for state-owned roadways.

COMMENTER: E. Finney

COMMENT #7: “Please keep me informed of any changes to the plan via email – evamfinney@gmail.com. I am especially interested in pedestrian safety.”

RESPONSE #7: The project team will keep your email on file. For pedestrian safety, see response to Comment #2.

COMMENTER: Brian Hopely and Jennifer Han, 443 Greenwood Avenue

COMMENT #8: “What will happen to our trees and mailbox? These will be affected by the easement.”

RESPONSE #8: If the trees or mailbox are in PennDOT existing right-of-way, they will be removed; the mailbox will then be set back outside of PennDOT right-of-way. During Final Design, if your trees, mailbox, or any part of your property will be impacted by the temporary construction easement or required right-of-way, PennDOT will contact you to discuss the right-of-way claim.

COMMENTER: Linda Wright Moore, 1314 Spruce Lane, Wyncote, PA 19095

COMMENT #9: “Current plan has no pedestrian access to Curtis Arboretum, the elementary school, college, or train station, in fact, on the corner of the Greenwood and Church intersection in front of the Rabinnical College, there is a “No Pedestrian” sign: ridiculous.”

RESPONSE #9: For pedestrian access to the Curtis Arboretum, elementary school, and college, see response to Comment #2. The train station is outside the limits of this project; however, see the response to Comment #2 for sidewalk improvements. “No Pedestrian Crossing” signs will be added at Church Road and Greenwood Avenue only at the locations where no crosswalks are provided (western and southern legs).

COMMENTER: Ken Daskus, 1408 Church Road

COMMENT #10: “I wonder if southbound Rices Mills could become no right turn on red during peak times. Will traffic lights from Rices Mills to Washington Lane be synced? The plan calls for using above ground wiring to sync the Greenwood and Rices Mills. Since the area will already be dug up may I suggest you bury the line? Lots of uncared for trees along that section of Church Road. I know it is outside the scope of the project, but would it be possible to get Ancillae Assumpta Academy to do something about the backup caused mostly on westbound Church Road when parents are dropping off and picking up their children? I’ve read that they just got a big grant and want to put in a new science building.”

RESPONSE #10: “No Turn on Red” signs will be added for all approaches at the intersection of Church Road and Rices Mill Road. The traffic signals at Rices Mills and Greenwood Avenue will be synchronized. The project team will evaluate the need to place this connection in underground conduit. The Washington Lane traffic signal is beyond the scope of work for this project; however, this comment will be discussed with the PennDOT Traffic Unit.

You are correct, your comment regarding Ancillae Assumpta Academy is beyond the scope of this project.

COMMENTER: R. Carl Bruno, 1315 Spruce Lane, Wyncote, PA

COMMENT #11: “Can there be a sign at the intersection of Spruce Lane and Greenwood stating ‘Do Not Block Intersection’ along with a white line?”

RESPONSE #11: See the response to Comment #5.

COMMENTER: John Raisch

COMMENT #12: “I would like electronic versions of pictures and posters to post to Cheltenham EAC web site.”

RESPONSE #12: The project team provided the electronic versions of the displays boards to the Cheltenham Township manager for them to distribute to township residents and township committees.

COMMENTER: Poppy Bass, 212 N. Bent Road, Wyncote, PA

COMMENT #13: Concerns regarding the number of trees proposed for removal from Curtis Arboretum. Requests for studies conducted and results, including accident statistics, how the

improvements are anticipated to impact the crash data, etc. Without understanding of the issues, the community cannot get behind the project.

RESPONSE #13: See response to Comment #1 (trees).

Regarding the request to provide data/reports on crash data, the Department can not provide accident history and Safety Studies as they are confidential and cannot be provided to the public. The peak hour turning movements / traffic counts are something that the Department can provide. You can submit an official Right to Know Request, however we may be limited with the information that can be provided, since this project is in preliminary design. If you would still like to submit the request, the form can be found here:

<http://www.dot.state.pa.us/public/PubsForms/Forms/Os-100.pdf>

COMMENTS: Wendy Ankrom, 102 Cliff Ter., Wyncote, PA 19095. Comments received via comment card and via email.

COMMENT #14: “Remove continuous right turns and extra lane for pedestrian safety” to reduce number of trees to be removed and increase pedestrian friendliness.

RESPONSE #14: See response to Comment #2 (pedestrian safety). The majority of the trees would still need to be removed even if the additional lane for eastbound Church Road was eliminated due to excavation of the root system.

COMMENT #15: “Downstream flooding is a major issue. The water management plans need to happen without removing trees and adding pavement;” consider alternative, more naturalistic storm water management features in addition to a retention basin.

RESPONSE #15: There is currently insufficient stormwater management. There are currently no stormwater storage facilities along the roadways in the project area, and there are no curbs. As part of the project, the roadways will be curbed. Drainage will be collected along the gutter line and conveyed through inlets and pipes to the stormwater basin that will be located on the Reconstructing Judaism College property. The purpose of the basin is to collect roadway runoff and release it slowly to prevent flooding. The basin is designed to slowly release water to a specific outfall point at a rate equal to existing conditions. All of the roadway runoff within the project limits will be collected and passed through the basin.

Permeability testing will occur during final design. If the testing indicates the site does not have adequate infiltration, then alternate measures will be investigated, such as underdrains, so that the facility can drain and become dry after storm events. It is best to get as much water as possible to sink down into the ground. However, when a site is close to the water table (as this site is), it becomes a challenge.

COMMENT #16: “Induced demand is going to result in more traffic through the intersection increasing local noise and air pollution.”

RESPONSE #16: The purpose of the project is not to increase capacity. The purpose of the project is to reduce congestion and improve the safety of the intersections within the project area.

COMMENT #17: “Removal of trees is a travesty. Destroys historic/green character of the area that makes Cheltenham unique.”

RESPONSE #17: See response to Comment #1 (trees).

COMMENT #18: Updates to this intersection should take into consideration Cheltenham’s sustainability commitments (i.e., Sustainability Plan, greenhouse gas reductions per Paris Climate Accord, and transitioning to 100% renewable energy).

RESPONSE #18: The purpose of the project is not to increase capacity. The purpose of the project is to reduce congestion and improve the safety of the intersections within the project area

COMMENT #19: “Updates including left turn lanes, left turn signals, sidewalk along Church Road and pedestrian crosswalks are excellent traffic and pedestrian safety modifications.”

RESPONSE #19: Thank you for your comment.

COMMENT #20: “Consider adding pedestrian crossing at Bent Road and sidewalks along Greenwood on the west side of the intersection.”

RESPONSE #20: Bent Road is beyond the limits of work for this project.

COMMENTER: Philip D. Wasson, 445 Greenwood Ave., Wyncote, PA 19095

COMMENT #21: “Some of the front of my property will be affected by lane-widening. There are two historical stone pillars at the end of my driveway. Will this project include moving them back if necessary, or what? Also, can I assume that access to utilities, e.g., PECO gas line, will be maintained correctly and not simply paved over?”

RESPONSE #21: The pillars at 445 Greenwood Ave. will not be impacted as part of this project. The grading for the roadway and driveway connection will tie in in front of the pillars. To address your utility concerns, prior to construction for the PennDOT project, the utility companies will be required to reset their utility poles and underground lines. PennDOT coordinates with the utility but it is the utility companies responsibility to conduct the work correctly. To address your stormwater concern, see response to Comment #16.

COMMENT #22: I REALLY hope that this project fixes all the stormwater runoff that overflows Church Road (between Rice’s Mill and Greenwood) and forms a creek through our backyards (and my basement!) during heavy storms.”

RESPONSE #22: See response to Comment #15 (stormwater).

COMMENTER: Lisa Donahue, 8209 Manor Road, Elkins Park, PA 19027

COMMENT #23: Requested clarification for proposed “phasing” of pedestrian crossings at both Greenwood and Rices Mill intersections, as received contradictory information at the open house (e.g., all stop or signals phased with traffic). Primary concern is proposed island on the northeast corner of Greenwood and Church, particularly that pedestrians would be stranded on the island with not enough time to walk from one side to other during a light change. This could be problematic specifically for school groups. Concern that four lanes of traffic would be too much. Requested that Rices Mill and Church Road intersections include a “No Turn on Red” signage for pedestrian safety, particularly school crossings. Concerns regarding the drainage basin – were hydrogeological studies conducted? The water table is very high in Cheltenham. What measures are proposed if drainage studies do not support proposed plan?

RESPONSE #23: See response to Comment #2 (pedestrian safety) and #15 (stormwater).

COMMENTER: Diane Schott, 209 Royal Avenue, Wyncote, PA 19095

COMMENT #24: Concerns regarding high traffic volumes during school dismissals (three area schools) – was this taken into account in the proposed plans? Requested paving at the northwest corner of Rices Mill and Church Road to accommodate student drop-off/pick-up, where currently parents have no exit except to exit on Rices Mill Road directly. Also requested crosswalk for students of Ancillae Assumpta Academy.

RESPONSE #24: See response to Comment #1 (traffic modeling).

Church Road within the project limits will be repaved during the project. Your comment regarding Ancillae Assumpta Academy is beyond the scope of this project.

COMMENTER: Richard Walker, 437 Greenwood Avenue, Wyncote, PA 19095

COMMENT #25: Drainage concerns, as it is located at a low receiving runoff from Barker and Church Roads onto his property on Greenwood Avenue. Two water inlets, located on the property, are continuously blocked during heavy rains, snow, and ice by discarded debris, trees, leaves, etc. and exacerbate the stormwater issues. Property owner was involved in earlier project discussions, but has since been removed from the project limits. Concerns of why his property was omitted from the current project limits and would like to have improvements to alleviate stormwater issues, specific to his property.

RESPONSE #25: See response to Comment #15 (stormwater). The PennDOT Project Manager will contact you to discuss your concern about the project limits not including your property.

COMMENTER: Emily Steinberg, 411 Randall Road, Wyncote, PA 19095

COMMENT #26: Traffic volume concerns and pedestrian crossing safety, particularly for Cheltenham H.S. students. Believes that the proposed projects plans will provide only a band-aid to the issues and requests a Comprehensive Traffic Plan, particularly addressing through-

traffic accessing Route 309. Proposes 1) a dedicated ramp for Route 309 that circumvents the neighborhood, 2) create easy to see road signs that direct traffic from Washington Lane to Cheltenham Avenue to Route 309, 3) alert traffic apps, such as Waze, of the preferred route.

RESPONSE #26: The purpose of the project is not to increase capacity. The purpose of the project is to reduce congestion and improve the safety of the intersections within the project area. Church Road is signed as a state road. GPS/Google Maps tell travelers to use Church Road. If the township owns the road, the township can ban truck traffic on the roads. Since it is a state road, PennDOT encourages vehicles to get from one end of the region to the other. A Comprehensive Traffic Study like you suggest is beyond the scope of work for this transportation project. Please contact Cheltenham Township or the Montgomery County Planning Commission with your suggestion for the traffic study. If this is a study they want to fund, they could work to get this study on the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP). The TIP identifies the capital projects in the region and finds sources to fund them.

COMMENTER: Earl Stamm, 209 Gribbel Road, Wyncote, PA 19095

COMMENT #27: Request for all complete studies and background data upon which PennDOT bases its current engineering proposal, as well as reasons, if any that PennDOT may have for why the proposed plan cannot be changed in any way.

RESPONSE #27: See the response to Comment #13 (right-to-know request).

As you are likely aware, the project has been around for 15+ years. An Alternatives Evaluation report was prepared in 2002 and in 2017 to evaluate whether the alternatives met the project's purpose and need. The evaluation also focused on the impact of each alternative to the adjacent properties. The following alternatives were evaluated in the report:

- Alternative 1 – No-Build
- Alternatives 2-8 – From a previous evaluation completed in 2002
- Alternative 9 – Minimize Impact to Curtis Arboretum
- Alternative 10 – Minimize Residential Impacts on Greenwood Ave.
- Alternative 11 – No Greenwood Ave. Turn Lane
- Alternative 12 – Balanced Widening on Greenwood Ave.
- Alternative 13 – Minimize Impacts to Reconstructionist Rabbinical College
- Alternative 14 – Roundabout

The alternative progressing through preliminary design is Alternative 13. It met the project's purpose and need, minimized impacts to the residential properties, and balanced impacts to Reconstructionist Rabbinical College and Curtis Arboretum.

COMMENT #28: Criticisms of the current design, including “it will eventually make the traffic problem worse (too many additional lanes), is not sufficient to solve the flooding in the area (proposed dry basin is inadequate), is not pedestrian friendly (traffic island), will unnecessarily and for the worse alter an area with significant local history (Curtis Arboretum and surrounding

area), and is environmentally unfriendly (unnecessarily adverse impact on Curtis Arboretum, a Township heritage site). It is based on outdated, misleading, and incorrect data.”

RESPONSE #28: See responses to Comments # 1(traffic modelling and trees), #2 (pedestrian safety), and #15 (stormwater).

COMMENTER: Emily Stine, 101 Cliff Terrace, Wyncote, PA 19095

COMMENT #29: “I want information on the traffic data used to determine the need for the size of the new intersection. Specifically, was the accident data used from before or after the addition of the left-turn arrow to the traffic light? No traffic data was made available at the open house.”

RESPONSE #29: See the response to Comment #13 (right-to-know request).

COMMENTER: Brooke Welsh, 8104 Heacock Lane

COMMENT #30: “In brief, this project is short sighted and limited. I do not support it. After extensive conversation with one of the project managers it became clear that not enough consideration has been done to see the wider implications of the project on the surrounding community, property values, public safety, and environmental impact. I do not believe this is sustainable, forward thinking project proposal. Cheltenham Township will be worse off for it.”

RESPONSE #30: Thank you for your comment, the Department respects your opinion. We do believe that this project will achieve the best balance of maximizing public safety while minimizing environmental impacts. This belief is based on the facts presented during the meeting which are a result of the engineering analysis completed for the project.

COMMENTER: Carole Maher, 774 Church Road, Elkins Park, PA 19027

COMMENT #31: Concerns that details of the project are not adequately publicized and that members of the community are not informed. Concerns regarding the large-scale of the project, loss of trees and large portions of Curtis park, flooding, unsafe pedestrian conditions, and the influx of more traffic. Cited improvement project to intersection of Church Road and Washington Lane as example of inadequate mitigation for loss of a Beech tree and stone wall, as well as increased traffic. Suggested that one left turn on westbound 309 with a crosswalk for entry into the park would suffice.

RESPONSE #31: See responses to Comments #1 (tree removal), #2 (pedestrian safety), and #15 (stormwater).

The project team is not familiar with the Washington Lane/Church Road project. However, the perimeter stone wall within the project area and the National Register boundary of the Curtis Arboretum along Church Road and Greenwood Avenue is in poor condition. The Arboretum Management Plan recommends that “The stone wall along Church Road should be rebuilt outside of the right-of-way and drip line of mature trees that will be replanted. The Township should strongly urge PennDOT to rebuild the wall to the quality of historical standards, or face the new wall with the stones from the original wall.” (Arboretum Management Plan, Page 3-

3) The perimeter stone wall will be reconstructed from just west of the Arboretum's Church Road entrance, west along Church Road to just east of the corner of Church Road and Greenwood Avenue, then from just south of that intersection, south along Greenwood Avenue to the Arboretum exit as part of this project. The opening at the southeast corner of Church Road and Greenwood Avenue will remain to accommodate future pedestrian/trail access, as recommended in the Arboretum Management Plan. The stone wall will be reconstructed seven (7) feet back from the new curb lines, which will vary throughout the project area. The wall will consist of a concrete core faced with original stone from the extant portions of the wall, with closely matching stone interspersed throughout to make up shortfalls.

COMMENTER: Edith Cerebi, 300 Maple Ave., Wyncote, PA 19095

COMMENT #32: "In the end, the design of this intersection will not meet the goal of relieving congestion at the intersection of Greenwood and Church Road, nor on Church Road itself, but invite more traffic. It is not pedestrian friendly, and I have not heard enough specifics about the stormwater management system to convince me that the runoff will not contribute to the flooding issues at and around Greenwood and Glenside, the true bottom of the hill. Further, removal of so many trees from the Curtis Arboretum will alter the character of the community for decades. The intersection needs improvement, but a scaled down version without the continuous turn lanes with more attention to pedestrian safety and the flooding concerns of the wider area is warranted."

RESPONSE #32: See responses to Comments #1 (traffic modeling and trees), #2 (pedestrian safety), and #15 (stormwater).

COMMENTER: Ms. Olga McHugh, 127 Hewett Road, Wyncote, PA 19095

COMMENT #33: "Why you will not consider the impact this project will have on the Wyncote Historic District?"

RESPONSE #33: The Curtis Arboretum is the only National Register listed or eligible property in the project area of potential effect (APE). The Wyncote Historic District is not within the project APE. See below figure showing the boundaries of the Wyncote Historic District and the project limits.



COMMENT #34: “Continuous right turn lanes are dangerous to pedestrians and to residents exiting streets or driveways. Explain the rationale for this unnecessary part of the project.”

RESPONSE #34: See response to Comment #2 (pedestrian safety).

COMMENT #35: “Why are pedestrians not the highest priority - you continually place all your emphases and design on vehicles. This is wrong.”

RESPONSE #35: See response to Comment #2 (pedestrian safety).

COMMENT #36: “Why have you not gotten an "ok" from the Army Corp of engineers and the PA DEP for your dry detention and water runoff plans?”

RESPONSE #36: The project is currently in Preliminary Design. Coordination with the PADEP and the Montgomery County Conservation District will occur during Final Design during the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit application process. Since there are no project impacts to wetlands or waterways, a permit with the Army Corps of Engineers is not needed.

COMMENT #37: “Why did you choose to have an open house and not an informational meeting for the public?”

RESPONSE #37: The project open house was an informational meeting. Members of the project team were available for one-on-one discussion.

COMMENT #38: “Who in Cheltenham Township has approved your plans?”

RESPONSE #38: The PennDOT project team has met with the Cheltenham Township Manager and other members of the Township staff. Coordination between the Township and PennDOT is ongoing. Please note that the Department is not required to design to municipal ordinances or to obtain municipal approvals. With that said, the Department will continue to coordinate with Cheltenham Township as the design is progressed.

COMMENT #39: Concerns that proposed plan invites more traffic and larger vehicles without regard to additional emissions, damage to roads, destruction of the community character, and desires of the residents.

RESPONSE #39: The purpose of the project is to reduce congestion and improve the safety of the intersections within the project area. See responses to Comments #1 (traffic modeling and trees) and #2 (pedestrian safety).

COMMENT #40: “There is no question that the intersection of Greenwood Ave. and Church Road needs improvement. Scale back your project, spend less money, and do not destroy the historic character that makes Chelt. A desirous place in which to live. Keep the project simple. No continuous right turn lanes. No concrete islands. Concrete islands are unnecessary and enlarge the project area. They are unsafe for pedestrians.”

RESPONSE #40: See response to #1 (trees), #2 (pedestrian safety), and #31 (stone wall).

COMMENT #41: “Make center lanes for left turns with dedicated left turn arrows, cars continually run red lights making left turns very dangerous.”

RESPONSE #41: See responses to Comments #1 (traffic modeling) and #2 (pedestrian safety).

COMMENT #42: “If you are unwilling to make modifications and/or repair and replace areas of construction, then say so publically.”

RESPONSE #42: The Department is willing to incorporate suggestions from the public if the suggestions will result in an increased level of safety or operation and are consistent with the scope of work for the project. The Department is responsible for delivering this project within a schedule and budget, and any suggested modifications need to be carefully vetted by the Department’s professionals before they can be incorporated.

COMMENT #43: “Curtis is a focal point for our community with township meetings, events and activities taking place on the grounds. We need to get there safely. Pedestrians on foot and bike and the residents need to be given first priority, not vehicles.”

RESPONSE #43: See response to Comment #2 (pedestrian safety).

COMMENT #44: “After fact checking the data you handed out at the consulting party meeting, the data is incorrect with respect to accidents. You state that you are planning for a 1% growth

rate in the far suburbs- no where do you say how you arrived at this conclusion. The project is more than 15 years old, closer to 20 in planning, when was your data updated and where is this data to be read? Chelt. Adopted a sustainability plan in 2013, your plan does not comply- “to minimize vehicular travel and emissions.” Your open house, April 4, 2019, was not informational, rather a show and justification to reinforce your plan. Your representatives were not willing to listen or consider alternative ideas. Written comment/reply will only be acceptable.”

RESPONSE #44: See responses to Comments #1 (traffic models), #2 (pedestrian safety), #13 (right-to-know request). The purpose of the project is not to increase capacity. The purpose of the project is to reduce congestion and improve the safety of the intersections within the project area. This comment response document is being sent to the individuals who attended the April 4, 2019 Open House.

COMMENTER: Thomas McHugh, 127 Hewett Road, Wyncote, PA 19095

COMMENT #45: Concerns for pedestrian safety, particularly in accessing Curtis park where numerous community events take place. Currently, no pedestrian crossing signage at the intersection of Church Road and Greenwood Avenue forces potential walkers to drive to meetings and other park events, increasing VMT and GHG emissions.

RESPONSE #45: See response to #2 (pedestrian safety).

COMMENT #46: “In the 21st century public policy needs to match the sustainability goals of the Township, MCPC and the DVRPC. Numerous authoritative studies point to Induced Traffic being a result of Congestion Management projects. In simple common sense terms, the perceived convenience of greater and faster traffic flow eventually causes more traffic, VMT, GHG emissions, and travel delays, until the original level of driver inconvenience is met. 'Modernization' of the Greenwood Avenue and Church Road intersection, in the form of widening and adding continuous right turn lanes, will increase the danger to pedestrians and bikers by increasing traffic and traffic speed, while just moving the congestion down the roads to the next queue. The obvious natural beauty and historical significance of this section of Wyncote, as well as the property values of the affected homes, must be preserved while the intersection is made safe and legal for pedestrians and bikers to cross. A sensible plan that provides left turn lanes and an improved signal scheme will be a good improvement without the detrimental effects of the current proposed plan #13. The word “safety” should refer to pedestrians and bikers, not simply drivers.”

RESPONSE #46: See responses to #1 (traffic modeling) and #2 (pedestrian safety).

COMMENTER: Barbara Granger, PhD, CPRP, LLC, 405 Randall Road, Wyncote, PA 19095. Comments received via comment card and email.

COMMENT #47: “Access to Randall Road is between the 2 intersections that are the focus of this project. There is a storm drain at the entrance to Randall Road which is always flooding and is very slow to drain. Jorj and Sue who live at the Randall Road entrance have told me stories of

their going out to clear the drain in the middle of an especially heavy rain or snow/ice storm in order to access their car parked on the other side of the flooding. We live on the other side of Randall and our property is on a slant toward the end of the road. While we've only been here for less than 2 years, we have learned that when it rains, the runoff comes from our neighbors homes and over our "lawn" on its way to the drain. We realized that the swale on the township's property does not get cleared and set to work to do so. The township did remove the many bags of leaves we packed into trash bags. Now the water dashes down the swale and less on our land to the drain at the end of Randall more effectively. However, the drain gets flooded now perhaps even more so. We would very much appreciate your integrating the Randall/Church Road drainage point into your overall Church Road stormwater management system.”

RESPONSE #48: (Curt Venditti, PennDOT Consultant Project Manager responded via email to this comment on April 19, 2019). I have asked our engineers to investigate the drainage at the specific area that you have mentioned below. As you are aware, PennDOT will be installing a new drainage system as part of this project, and along with that, we will see what can be done to improve drainage at this location. If our engineers determine that additional inlets can be added at the intersection to drain the area, we will do so as part of the project.

COMMENT #49: “The entrance and exit at Church and Randall Roads is rather steep. After years of resurfacing Church Road, each new layer has meant a steeper access grade to our street. When the final work is completed for the storm water construction, it would be appreciated if a more appropriate grading could be appointed for access to Randall Road.”

RESPONSE #49: (Curt Venditti, PennDOT Consultant Project Manager responded via email to this comment on April 19, 2019). Regarding the grades at the intersection, I was at the site yesterday and I see your concern. I have also asked our engineer to investigate re-paving a portion of Randall Road near the intersection at Church to make the vertical transition less abrupt.

COMMENT #50: “We also spoke of another matter ... that of obtaining the most recent Church Road traffic analysis for this area. You indicated that I simply had to submit a "right to know" form to do so. Please direct me to the right person for such a request.”

RESPONSE #50: See response to Comment #13 (right-to-know).

COMMENTER: Linda Wright Moore, 1314 Spruce Lane, Wyncote, PA 19095

COMMENT #51: Concerns regarding pedestrian safety, particularly in accessing Curtis Arboretum, elementary schools and high schools within the project area. In addition, community members would like access to walk to the train station, walking along Greenwood Avenue and across Church Road. Suggests the following additional sidewalks and crosswalks: 1) sidewalks on both sides of Church Road, between Rices Mill and Greenwood; 2) sidewalk on the Spruce Lane side of Greenwood from Church Road to the bridge now being repaired; and 3) another crosswalk at the Greenwood/Church intersection so that people in “my quadrant” of the neighborhood can cross the street to reach both the train station and/or the Arboretum.

RESPONSE #51: Adding a sidewalk along Greenwood Avenue from Church Road to the bridge now being repaired is beyond the scope of this project. Sidewalk on the south side of Church Road is not proposed for this project; however, this project will not preclude the construction of sidewalks in additional locations. The Township can be consulted for the construction of additional sidewalks both inside and outside of the project area. See response to Comment #2 (pedestrian safety).

COMMENT #52: "...if we are indeed concerned about climate change and reducing our 'carbon footprints' then perhaps a step or two in the direction of supporting those who wish to travel on two feet rather than four wheels is in order."

RESPONSE #52: See response to Comment #2 (pedestrian safety).

COMMENTER: Gail Post, 106 Cliff Terrace, Wyncote, PA 19095

COMMENT #53: "Please reconsider your decision to: 1) remove trees from Curtis, which destroys them, but also results in run-off. The need for the dry detention basin, which will not withstand the storms recently affecting the area."

RESPONSE #53: See responses to Comments #1 (trees) and #15 (stormwater).

COMMENT #54: "Please reconsider your decision to: 2) the continuous right turn lane is problematic for pedestrians and unnecessary."

RESPONSE #54: See responses to Comments #2 (pedestrian safety).

COMMENT #55: "Please reconsider your decision to: 3) the concrete island is a waste of land use and unnecessary, as the right turn lanes should be abandoned."

RESPONSE #55: See response to Comment #2 (pedestrian safety).

COMMENT #56: "Please reconsider your decision to: 4) the late merge from the right lane back into traffic going east on Church right before the entrance to Curtis is an invitation to MVAs, as cars will be hit from behind as they try to make the turn."

RESPONSE #56: See response to Comment #1 (traffic modeling).

COMMENT #57: "Please reconsider your decision to: 5) make pedestrian entrance to Curtis at the intersection a priority."

RESPONSE #57: See response to Comment #2 (pedestrian safety). This pedestrian entrance to Curtis Arboretum was noted in The Curtis Arboretum: Conservation & Landscape Management Plan (Summer 2016).

COMMENTER: Robert Collings, 213 Barker Road, Wyncote, PA 19095

COMMENT #58: “What traffic studies were done?”

RESPONSE #58: See response to Comment #1 (traffic modeling).

COMMENT #59: Concerns regarding the fade-in lane from Greenwood Ave. to eastbound Church Road will create risks in a tight intersection for pedestrians and through traffic on a green light. Believed that an additional lane on Church Road to allow through traffic when cars want to turn left onto Greenwood Avenue, as well as pedestrian crossings/sidewalks, made sense. Concerns that additional turn lanes for right turns and pavement may create problems with pedestrian crossings and were unnecessary.

RESPONSE #59: See responses to Comments #1 (traffic modeling) and #2 (pedestrian safety).

COMMENT #60: “Replanting of removed trees or replacement is important. Curtis an arboretum.”

RESPONSE #60: See response to Comment #1 (trees).

COMMENTER: Thomas Mullian, 1112 Church Road, Wyncote, PA 19095

COMMENT #61: “Increased non-local traffic to 309, tractor trailers, etc.”

RESPONSE #61: The purpose of the project is not to increase capacity. The purpose of the project is to reduce congestion and improve the safety of the intersections within the project area. See response to Comment #26 (regional traffic study).

COMMENT #62: “Unsafe access to Greenwood for neighbors on side streets”

RESPONSE #62: See response to Comment #5 (Spruce Lane) and #49 (Randall Road).

COMMENT #63: “How can you have a safe crosswalk/island area at Church and Greenwood when these are continuous turning lanes?”

RESPONSE #63: See response to Comment #2 (pedestrian safety).

COMMENT #64: “Destruction of green spaces – removal of 17 trees”

RESPONSE #64: See response to Comment #1 (trees).

COMMENT #65: “Insufficient planning to account for water runoff into historic area that has already suffered damage in 2 major storms”

RESPONSE #65: See response to Comment #15 (stormwater).

COMMENT #66: “Potential increased taxes on citizens for up keep. This project is ill-conceived, overblown, and short-sighted and should be configured to fix only what is needed and green space should be maintained.”

RESPONSE #66: Questions regarding property taxes should be directed to your Municipality or elected officials.

COMMENTER: Ann Rappoport, PhD, 114 E. Waverly Road, Wyncote, PA 19095

COMMENT #67: Several positive aspects of the project, including 1) efforts to meet pedestrian needs and safety; 2) efforts to remediate current and manage additional future stormwater runoff and flooding; 3) commitment to rebuild the actual stone wall of the National Register of Historic Places – listed Curtis Arboretum; 4) Agreement by PennDOT in the past two years to facilitate the timing of a dedicated left-turn signal for westbound vehicles on Church Road onto Greenwood Avenue before allowing oncoming eastbound vehicles on Church has helped to manage vehicular traffic.”

RESPONSE #67: Thank you for your comment.

COMMENT #68: Concerns regarding the volume of traffic on Church Road and Greenwood Avenue, including “1) significant portion of this vehicular traffic is not local; 2) the volume of this vehicular traffic is challenging the character of the neighborhoods in the municipality and overwhelming the services and budget of the municipality responsible for them; 3) a more regional “fix” needs to be developed to handle the volume and kind of traffic on these neighborhood roads. Perhaps constructing a bypass/interbelt linking 309 to Cheltenham Avenue, Old York Road (611), Washington Lane, Meetinghouse Road or Huntingdon Pike (232) should be considered instead of construction here; 4) the signal changes two years ago improved the efficiency of the intersection for vehicular traffic; 5) additional signal changes should be implemented before pursuing radical reconstruction of this intersection.”

RESPONSE #68: See response to Comment #26 (regional traffic study) and #1 (traffic model).

COMMENT #69: Concerns regarding proposed design, specifically 1) merger lanes will create more uncertainty, speed bursts and short stops, and likely more, rather than fewer crashes; 2) aggressive merger behaviors often slow traffic flow and will likely diminish efficiency gains; 3) continuous right turn lanes create hazards for pedestrians and residential egress from driveways and side streets; 4) the concrete islands, designed for aiding pedestrians, may instead be intimidating and deterrents to many pedestrians; 5) additional lanes of traffic create challenges to pedestrians and roadside litter management as well.

RESPONSE #69: See responses to Comments #1 (traffic model) and #2 (pedestrian safety).

COMMENT #70: Although Curtis Arboretum has been recognized by PennDOT through the Federal Section 106 process, concerns regarding the impact to the natural habitat by increased proximity of the enlarged intersection, including increased exposure to toxins, deterrent barriers

for some animals to cross into other habitats to improve mating opportunities and facilitate a healthier gene pool, creating an “island effect.”

RESPONSE #70: These environmental concerns will be documented in the project’s National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document.

COMMENTER: Daniel Welsh, 1112 Church Road, Wyncote, PA 19095

COMMENT #71: “The proposed plan does not address the needs and concerns of our community. Water run-off and drainage will impact the historic houses in the area, as well as raise taxes for road maintenance. My property has had continuous water run-off issues since the widening of Church Road on the Washington Lane side.”

RESPONSE #71: See responses to Comments #15 (stormwater). Your property is outside the limits of this transportation project and beyond the scope of the project. If you have a specific stormwater or drainage concern that you feel is being caused by a PennDOT roadway, please contact the PennDOT Customer Care Center <https://customercare.penndot.gov/>. Questions regarding property taxes should be directed your Municipality or elected officials.

COMMENTER: Joseph and Mirka Augustine, along with Concerned Cheltenham Citizens, 1017 Greenwood Avenue, Wyncote, PA 19095

COMMENT #72: Concerns regarding “pedestrian safety with unnecessary, continuous right turn lanes and concrete islands.”

RESPONSE #72: See response to Comment #2 (pedestrian safety).

COMMENT #73: Concerns “maintaining property values for taxpaying residents with the increase of non-local traffic, trucks, and tractor trailers accessing and exiting Route 309.”

RESPONSE #73: See response to Comment #71 (local taxes) and #26 (regional traffic study).

COMMENT #74: Concerns regarding “removal of 17 or more mature, Arboretum trees, in addition to the loss of green space to 100 car parking area at a National Register of Historic Places.”

RESPONSE #74: See response to Comment #1 (trees). The loss of green space to 100 car parking area is not a PennDOT project; this is a Cheltenham Township project. Therefore, PennDOT can not comment on that project.

COMMENT #75: Concerns regarding “environmental impact on the surrounding community from increased traffic, carbon emissions, and water runoff, particularly in the historic district north on Greenwood that has already had two major flooding events in recent years.”

RESPONSE #75: See responses to Comments #1 (traffic modeling) and #15 (stormwater).

COMMENT #76: Concerns regarding “difficult access to main roads for local residents living on side streets.”

RESPONSE #76: See response to Comment #5 (Spruce Lane) and #49 (Randall Road).

COMMENT #77: Concerns regarding “consistent speeding from Through traffic on both Greenwood and Church Road, and other main roads impacted by traffic from Route 309.”

RESPONSE #77: See response to Comment #71 (local taxes) and #26 (regional traffic study). The concern regarding consistent speeding is a local enforcement issue.

COMMENT #78: Concerns regarding “increased taxes for road maintenance and highway patrols.”

RESPONSE #78: See response to Comment #71 (local taxes)

COMMENT #79: Is the proposed plan utilizing up-to-date data? Concerns that the proposed plan will not be sustainable and will cause induced traffic and further congested traffic patterning.

RESPONSE #79: See response to Comment #1 (traffic modeling).

COMMENT #80: Requests to meet and discuss alternatives with PennDOT and elected officials, including the following points to be considered:

- a. “Improvements to the intersection of Church/Greenwood along the borders of the Arboretum must maintain, or improve, local quality of life to Cheltenham citizens.
- b. Create a safe intersection for pedestrians to access the Arboretum to attend community and legislative events.
- c. Keep the intersection simple. Do not add more impervious surface than necessary, thereby reducing loss of residential or township properties. Taking 30 feet along the Arboretum border from entrance to exit points and 17 mature trees is excessive.
- d. Change existing traffic light patterns before a large-scale project is begun.
- e. Insist on complete and detailed statistics regarding volume of traffic, including vehicle count that make right turns, and vehicle count that uses Rices Mill and Greenwood Avenue to access Route 309.
- f. Obtain current statistics regarding volume of traffic versus accidents.
- g. No continuous turning lanes.
- h. No concrete islands.
- i. Contact GPS mappers to have trucks rerouted away from the Church Road/Greenwood Avenue intersection (e.g., signage along Washington Lane to direct traffic south to 309 by alternate route).
- j. Install speed humps before and after the Greenwood Avenue bridge and 25 MPH portion to force traffic to adhere to a slower speed.
- k. Determine the true impact that this project will have on flooding in the Wyncote Historic District. This should include an EIS analyzed by the ACE and PADEP.

- l. Develop a Comprehensive Traffic Plan that includes Pennsylvania’s Traffic Calming plan. (Per PA’s Traffic Calming Handbook introduction, PennDOT policy supports the use of traffic calming measures.)
- m. Develop a plan that solves the underlying issues of the Church Road, Greenwood Avenue, and Rices Mill traffic triangle that will benefit the entire community for years to come and preserve our green space at Curtis Arboretum.”

RESPONSE #80: See responses to Comments #1 (traffic modeling), #2 (pedestrian safety), #13 (right-to-know), #26 (regional traffic study), #15 (stormwater).

COMMENTER: Theresa Camerota, 1112 Church Road, Wyncote, PA 19095

COMMENT #81: Concern regarding increased non-local traffic, including tractor trailers, accessing Route 309.

RESPONSE #81: See response to Comment #26 (regional traffic study).

COMMENT #82: Concern regarding the removal of 17 mature trees, in addition to the many trees that have been removed for a 100-car parking area in the arboretum.

RESPONSE #82: See response to Comment #1 (trees) and #74 (100 car parking area).

COMMENT #83: Concern regarding the right turn lanes behind a concrete island for pedestrians (“unsafe and unnecessary”).

RESPONSE #83: See response to Comment #2 (pedestrian safety).

COMMENT #84: Concern regarding access to Greenwood and Church roads for Wyncote neighbors from side roads.

RESPONSE #84: See response to Comment #5 (Spruce Lane) and #49 (Randall Road).

COMMENT #85: Concern regarding water runoff into historic district north on Greenwood that have already been flooded twice by storms and ongoing water issues. “My property has had 4 major water issues from PennDOT roadwork about 6-7 years ago. Issues that are still not repaired.”

RESPONSE #85: In email dated May 1, 2019, Camerota noted that via correspondence with C. Venditti, PennDOT has visited her property to report on necessary repairs and will be addressing drainage issues in the near future. It was also noted that potholes at the corner of Washington Lane and Church Road have worsened, as they may never have been properly repaired when the road was raised 10 years ago.

COMMENT #86: Concerns regarding increased taxes for road maintenance.

RESPONSE #86: See response to Comment #71 (taxes).

COMMENT #87: Concern regarding diminishing property values.

RESPONSE #87: See response to Comment #X (property values).

COMMENT #88: Concern regarding speeding and bottlenecking traffic that has been shown from induced traffic surveys.

RESPONSE #88: See response to Comment #1 (traffic modeling).

COMMENT #89: Following an event held at the Arboretum, concerns that many residents are unaware of the project details; suggest considering an additional informational meeting for the community.

RESPONSE #89: This comment response document is being provided to all of the attendees who signed in at the April 4, 2019 Open House.

COMMENT #90: Suggestion of using Shoppers Lane as a bypass; many commuters are currently utilizing this route as the bridge is out.

RESPONSE #90: See response to Comment #26 (regional traffic study).

COMMENTER: Donna Wray, President of The Friends of Curtis Arboretum

COMMENT #91: “Accessibility to the park by pedestrians has been one of the top concerns raised by the membership since the inception of the Friends' group. This intersection is essential to cross for a child, or anyone, who wants to walk to Wyncote Elementary School, Cheltenham High School, Wyncote Train Station, or our Curtis Arboretum. We appreciate that this plan improves the ability for pedestrians to cross the intersection. However, looking at the latest version of the plans, it will not be possible to get to or from the southwest corner of the intersection. We would ask you to alter the plan to create safe pedestrian crossings in all directions. Having some crossings but not all, combined with increased traffic, will lead to riskier behavior by pedestrians. Additionally, the township is committed to improving our walkability score - this is our chance to maximize the accessibility for this intersection. Please consider that safer pedestrian walkways are good for our children, the environment, the health of the community, and the use of the park resources.”

RESPONSE #91: See response to Comment #2 (pedestrian safety).

COMMENT #92: “This Arboretum is in a residential community. A giant intersection that encourages increased traffic will change the nature of the neighborhood. We beg you to keep our green space quiet and the bulk of traffic on other roads that are already wide. We love the parts of the design that are designed to increase safety, but in this GPS-centric driving era, we are skeptical that the net results will be fewer accidents; a dramatically wider intersection will draw increased traffic.”

RESPONSE #92: See response to Comments #1 (traffic modeling) and #16 (induced traffic).

COMMENT #93: “The most obvious change that we object to is the loss of the majestic tree border of the Arboretum. Some of these trees are already the victims of neglect, but many have decades of life left. For example, Tulip Poplars can live 200 years or more. These trees are irreplaceable in terms of their effect on the ecosystem -- stormwater management being just one. They define a space that was designed by the famous Olmsted Brothers Landscape Architects. The Hall and Arboretum are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. We ask you to please leave as many mature trees as possible, where they are healthy. Where you must tear down trees, please replace them with as large a tree as is practical. Please also plant them as early in the project as you can so that we spend less time with bare landscape. Our Board includes an historian, two landscape architects, and an environmental planner, and can help you to combine the Master Plan for the Arboretum, the current state of the Arboretum, and the plans for the intersection.”

RESPONSE #93: See response to Comment #1 (trees).

COMMENT #94: “We are concerned that two of the ways in and out of the park (one on Church, one on Greenwood) will be made more hazardous by these changes. There are already issues with the sight distance of drivers using these. More traffic, plus a merge just before the main park entrance, make the park less accessible to safe vehicle traffic than it is today. The Township, in accordance with its master plan for Curtis Arboretum, would like to realign both driveways to make them safer. We ask that you work with the Township during the design process for this project to appropriately site and design these driveways to improve safety for the site and other homes, businesses, and institutions within the project area.”

RESPONSE #94: Realignment of the Arboretum driveways is beyond the scope of this project and is the responsibility of Cheltenham Township. PennDOT will continue to work with the Township during the design process to make sure the Church Road project does not preclude elements of the Township’s design for the arboretum entrances.