

I. Executive Summary

A. Background

In the not too distant past, walking and bicycling were normal parts of everyday life in the Montgomery Peters Mercersburg study area. Children walked and rode bicycles to school, parks, and nearby shops. Adults walked and rode bicycles along relatively quiet roads. Trips to the store or to visit friends and neighbors were easily accomplished on foot or bicycle. But as development has intensified in recent decades and our society has grown ever more dependent on the automobile, this way of getting around – this way of life – has largely been lost. Children often cannot walk safely to the school bus stop, let alone to school or to parks. Adults cannot walk or bicycle safely along many of the key roads in the study area. In short, it is next to impossible to get around the Montgomery Peters Mercersburg area without an automobile. We cannot turn back the clock on the development that has occurred and we cannot eliminate the traffic that has followed that development. But we can regain the quality of life that comes with bringing back long lost options for healthy mobility and recreation in the study area. The pedestrian and bicycle network recommended in this plan, once implemented, will allow this part of Franklin County to largely regain the quality of life and exercise we once enjoyed and allow walkers, runners, and bicyclists to get around along with the automobiles and trucks that currently dominate our roads.



PA Route 416 south from Shimpstown Road typifies the study area's narrow pavement widths and high prevailing speeds

B. General Objectives of this Study

The overall objective of this study is to serve as a guide for Montgomery, Peters and Mercersburg in the creation a network of sidepaths, sidewalks, trails, bike lanes, and other appropriate facilities to restore the ease and safety of walking and bicycling in the area. This plan is intended to promote safe and convenient walking and bicycling within local neighborhoods and to regional attractions such as Mercersburg, Buchanan's Birthplace State Park, Fort Loudon, Conococheague Institute, Whitetail Resort, and others. While residents will still make the majority of trips in automobiles, walking and bicycling should be restored to equal status as options for any trip one would wish to take within the Montgomery Peters Mercersburg area.

C. Study Recommendations

This plan recommends a network of sidewalks, sidepaths, trails, and existing quiet roads that will provide walking or bicycling access between all locations in the study area. The entire network is depicted in maps included in the appendix of this report. While providing access to every part of the study area, the plan pays special attention to linking villages, schools, commercial centers and historic sites. When complete, this network will create significant transportation and recreation opportunities for walkers, runners, and bicyclists.

The completed network will consist of a variety of facility types, which are discussed in detail later in this report. In some cases, existing quiet roads allow for safe walking and bike riding in their current condition, given their very low traffic volumes. In other cases, there are existing sidewalks in place, but with gaps in coverage that need to be filled in. In still other areas, the narrower and more heavily traveled roads will require sidewalks or sidepaths to create walking opportunities that currently do not exist at all. Most of the sidewalks and sidepaths will be approximately 4-10 feet wide and will consist of a mix of paved and unpaved facilities. The multi-use paths should be about 10 feet wide and may also consist of both paved and unpaved portions. Finally, bicycle routes are recommended for wider thoroughfares such as Route 16 southeast of Mercersburg. In some locations, formal bike lanes may be possible. In other areas, the bicycle route may consist of wide shared lanes and signs indicating the presence of bicyclists.



**Lightly-travelled Royer Road near Bain Road
with Cove Mountain in the distance**

D. Implementation

In addition to recommending a network of walking and bicycling facilities, this study also includes an implementation plan to guide Montgomery Peters Mercersburg in ongoing efforts to bring this recommended network to fruition. The implementation plan consists of a phasing plan, estimates of the costs associated with implementing each of the recommended facilities, and recommended sources of grant funding for each facility or group of facilities.

The phasing plan designates which facilities are the highest priority and should be undertaken first, which are second priority, third priority, and fourth priority. Each of the phases is depicted on individual maps in the appendix, numbered L.1 to L.4 (overall maps) and M.1 to M.4 (Mercersburg detail maps).

- **Phase 1** links Mercersburg to Buchanan High School, creates a walking-biking loop within Mercersburg, and implements a side path along McFarland Road.
- **Phase 2** connects towns and villages in the study area – Mercersburg, Fort Loudon, Lemasters, Upton – with local attractions including Buchanan’s Birthplace State Park, Fort Loudon Historic Site, Montgomery Township Park, and Whitetail Resort.
- **Phase 3** establishes connections to the surrounding area, building upon progress made in previous phases. Included are sidepaths along narrow and heavily traveled roads, e.g. Route 16 from Mercersburg to Upton, and a multi-use side path along Route 75 from Shimpstown to Kasiesville. Improvements are carried to the edges of the study area (municipal boundaries) that lead to adjoining destinations outside the study area such as the C&O canal, Hagerstown, Greencastle, Chambersburg and points west (McConnellsburg).
- **Phase 4** completes the network by linking the improvements made in previous phases.

It should be noted that placing projects in the later phases does not mean that no action should be taken toward their implementation until all other phases are complete. Rather, it is a recognition that these facilities may require considerable time and effort to complete and will probably be among the last links completed. Nonetheless, opportunities relating to these projects should be pursued whenever they present themselves.