2025

Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission
Active Transportation Plan Update
Community Engagement Summary

Allegheny | Armstrong | Beaver | Butler | Fayette | Greene | Indiana | Lawrence | Pittsburgh | Washington | Westmoreland

TOOLE DESIGN

Community Engagement Summary

The Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC) hosted a series of four listening sessions and offered an online survey to engage the public during the development of the Active Transportation Plan (ATP) update. These engagement opportunities were designed to understand the public's experience and solicit input on priorities for the plan.

Listening Sessions

The activities provided at the listening sessions focused on project goals, types of stresses active transportation users experience, and specific opportunities and challenges. Listening sessions were held across the region, in partnership with local county planning departments. The project team hosted four, three-hour, open house style events held in public meeting spaces. Details on the activities at the listening sessions are provided below.

Listening Session Dates

04 Dec 2024	Listening session in Beaver Falls (11-2pm)
09 Dec 2024	Listening session in Washington (3-6pm)
12 Dec 2024	Listening session in Indiana (3-6pm)
07 Jan 2025	Listening session in Pittsburgh (3-6pm)

Listening Session Activities

- Goals
    - A large sheet was provided with the title: "What is your GOAL for active transportation in Southwestern PA?"
    - Participants were asked to complete a sticker and add it to the sheet: "By [insert date], The Southwestern Pennsylvania region will be [insert a goal], as shown by [insert a way to measure progress]."
- Stresses
    - A large sheet was provided with the title: "What stresses you out when walking in Southwestern PA?" Participants were asked to add sticky notes with their responses.
    - A large sheet was provided with the title: "What stresses you out when biking in Southwestern PA?" Participants were asked to add sticky notes with their responses.
- Location-specific issues
    - Large maps were provided showing sections of the SPC region. Participants were asked to add dots or lines at locations of significance.
    - Participants could add dots to show challenges or opportunities. They could add lines to illustrate a difficult existing route or a desired future route.
- Map inputs gathered from these activities are documented in the interactive web-application.

During the listening sessions, the project team received 120 comments in response to the regional questions and 84 comments indicating challenges and opportunities on the maps provided. Listening session activity results are captured and summarized in Appendix A.
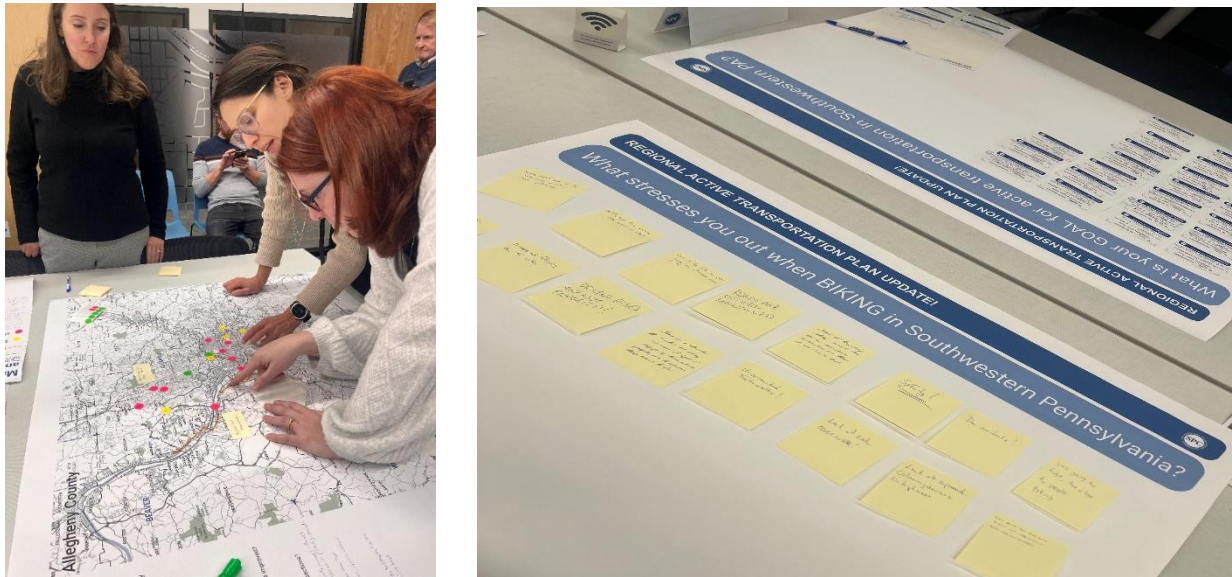
Figure 1: Activities from Listening Sessions

Online Survey

The online survey was developed to capture different types of input from the listening sessions and to engage people who were unable to participate in listening sessions. The survey asked people to share how active transportation is a part of their route travel, what active transportation safety issues they encounter, how they use trails in our region, and their priorities for Complete Streets and Safe Routes to Schools programming.

Survey

24 Nov 24 - 15 Jan 25	The survey was open to the public
25 Nov 2024	SPC promoted the survey
15 Jan 2025	The survey received 393 responses

The project team received 393 responses to the online survey. Survey results are captured and summarized in Appendix B.

Appendix A

Goals

- In general, respondents called for expanded infrastructure networks for walking and biking. They want continuity to achieve connectivity.
- The top terms used to describe respondents' goals, in order from most to least used, are: connection, bike, accessible, walkable, safety, trail, pedestrian, transit, sidewalks, and place.
- The top terms used in respondents' indicators, in order from most to least used, are: McCandless, active, transportation, increased, bus, trails, roads, funding, connect, Harmony.
- There was a disproportionate number of goals focused on McCandless, biasing results.

Stresses: Walking

- Most comments focused on the current inadequacy of sidewalks. Concerns related to gaps, poor conditions, and narrow widths.
- Another notable concern was unsafe driver behavior.
- Other, less frequently mentioned concerns include infrastructure design issues such as lighting, signals, and signage.

Stresses: Biking

- The top concern noted by respondents was a lack of separated bike infrastructure. A related concern was having to share the road with drivers who speed or don't respect the 4' rule.

Map Comments

- Map comments primarily focused on trail expansion but also included some street-based opportunities.

Appendix B

Location

- 55% of respondents are residents of Allegheny County.

Employment

- 76% of respondents said they work outside the home.

Travel to Work

- 11% of respondents said they walk (including assistive devices) to work on a daily basis.
- 20% of respondents said they bike (including e-bike) to work on a daily basis.

School Enrollment (post-HS)

- 22% of respondents said they attend a post-secondary school.
- University of Pittsburgh was the most common response.

Travel to School

- Respondents most frequently bike to school: 9% daily and 6% at least once a week.

Travel for Other Trips

- Respondents most frequently drive for other trips: 35% daily and 37% at least once a week.
- Nearly half of respondents (45%) travel 3 miles or less on a typical trip for errands, etc.

Electric Bicycles

- About 1/3 of respondents own an e-bike.
- 72% of respondents would be encouraged to purchase an e-bike if a point-of-sale voucher was available; a majority of those (⅔ of total respondents) would only act on a 25% or higher discount.
- About half of respondents would be somewhat or very likely to use a bike share program.
- An e-bike would significantly increase the likelihood of cycling for 18% of respondents; it would have no impact on likelihood for 23% of respondents.

Driving Habits

- 73% of respondents drive at least once per week.
- People who travel by car indicate their top reasons for doing so are: distance (72%), time (60%), and weather (52%).

Common Safety Issues

- Respondents identified the top safety issues for people who walk as: broken or uneven sidewalks (50%), unsafe crossings (49%), and not enough sidewalks (48%).
- Respondents identified the top safety issues for people who bike as: not enough lanes (62%), gaps in the cycling network (55%), and conflicts with vehicles (52%).

- Respondents identified the top safety issue for people who use public transit as gaps in the walking network (49%).

Trail Usage

- A majority of respondents (74%) use trails; they rated recreation (64%), exercise (55%), and access to nature (49%) as the top reasons they do so.
- The trails most used by respondents are: Three Rivers Heritage Trail (28%), Great Allegheny Passage (11%), and Sheepskin Trail (9%).
- Respondents typically get to their most frequently used trail by car (25%), bike (22%), and walking (17%).
  - Those traveling short distances (<1 mi) were most likely to walk (48%).
  - Those traveling moderate distances (1-5 mi) were as likely to drive as bike (about 30%), and less likely to use other modes.
  - Those traveling long distances (>5 mi) were very likely to drive (>60%).
- Most respondents (75%) felt very or somewhat safe traveling to their most frequently used trail.

Complete Streets

- A majority of respondents (58%) strongly agree that, "Streets in my community should be designed for everyone who uses the street network, even if it causes some delay for motorized traffic."
- 41% of respondents think that SPC should prioritize collaboration to advance Complete Streets.
- Respondents identified bike lanes and sidewalks as the most critical gaps in the networks that help people get around without a car:
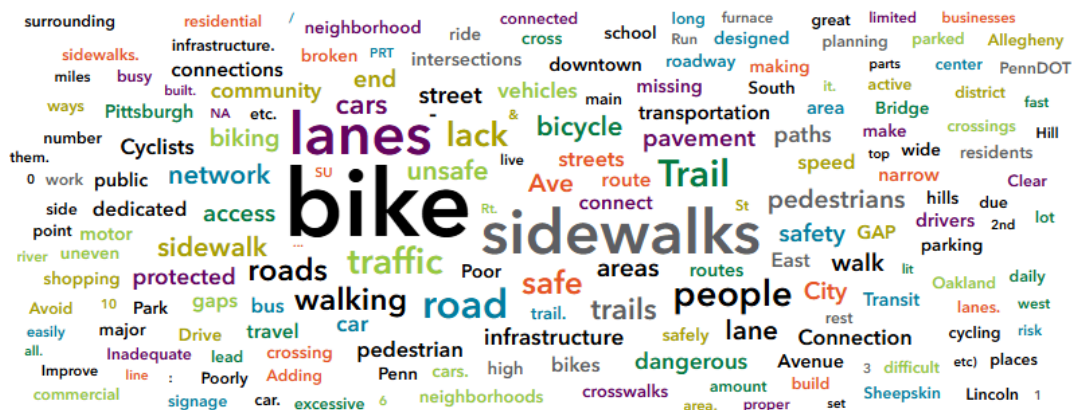
School Enrollment (K-12)

- A strong majority of respondents (71%) do not have school-aged children in their household.
- Just over a quarter (27%) of respondents with children live less than a mile from school.
- Nearly all respondents (94%) would be somewhat or very likely to allow their child(ren) to participate in a walking school bus program.
- Respondents said that SPC should prioritize technical assistance (32%), education (24%), and collaboration (21%) to advance SRTS.

Demographics

Largest group highlighted below.

- Gender identity: 55% male
- Age: 31% 25-34
- Race/ethnicity: 81% white
- Language: 97% English
- Household size: 35% two-person
- Household vehicles: 40% one-vehicle
- Household income: 13% $75k-99k
- Mobility limitations: 84% none

Methodological Notes

- General
  - At 393, the sample size was statistically significant with a 5% margin of error. However, best practice for public surveys is 500 -1000 responses. (Pittsburgh Regional Transit typically sets a goal of 2000.)
  - Given trends among the respondents, it's apparent that the sample is not representative of the SPC region population at large:
    - Respondents were more male, younger, and less white than the region as a whole (SPC 2020 Census profiles).
    - 55% of respondents are from Allegheny County; 48% of people within the SPC region live in Allegheny County.
    - 11% of respondents walk to work every day; 3.7% of Allegheny County (the most urban county) residents walk to work (2023 ACS 5-year estimate).
    - 20% of respondents bike to work every day; 0.4% of Allegheny County residents bike to work (2023 ACS 5-year estimate).
- Trail Usage
  - Dozens of different trails were named and only those trails in the SPC region (41) were counted. Sub-trails of the Three Rivers Heritage Trail (TRHT) were rolled up into that name; the TRHT and Great Allegheny Passage were kept separate, despite overlap.