

CHAPTER 19

REGIONAL INFLUENCES

INTRODUCTION

St. Lawrence Borough, Exeter Township and Amity Township are located just east of the City of Reading, stretching east along the Schuylkill River to just west of Douglass Township in Berks County and the Borough of Pottstown in Montgomery County. Business U.S. Route 422 goes through the western portion of Exeter Township and St. Lawrence Borough, creating an accessible avenue to and from Mt. Penn and the City of Reading. Business 422 connects to the 422 bypass (West Shore Bypass) located in the western portion of Exeter Township, and the Pottstown Bypass in the eastern portion of Amity Township. It also links to U.S. Route 222 and Business 222 (North and South) to the west and further east to Route 100 and the PA Turnpike. Route 662 links with Route 222 North and Route 73 and eventually 61. These routes can link this area to places like Philadelphia, Harrisburg, Allentown and Hershey, Pennsylvania. These roads have accelerated the rate of growth in the areas adjacent to the throughways, especially due to the fact that these major arterial roads are not limited access roads. A majority of the working population of the region's municipalities commutes to outside the region to work.

LAND USE

St. Lawrence, Exeter and Amity is a transition area on the fringe of the developed urban core of Berks County comprised of Reading and the eastern surrounding municipalities such as Mt. Penn and Lower Alsace Township.

Abutting portions of Mt. Penn Borough, St. Lawrence Borough is highly developed with high-density residential neighborhoods, developed in the grid style pattern, as older communities in Pennsylvania were initially planned. There is vacant land available within the Borough, however it is minimal. There are some opportunities for infill development. There is no true commercial core in St. Lawrence Borough, mostly due to the close proximity to the City of Reading and commercial areas along Business Route 422 in Exeter Township.

The Townships have a mixture of agricultural, rural and suburban areas, and several major open space areas such as Neversink Mountain, the Daniel Boone Homestead and Monocacy Hill. Much of the development within the Townships has occurred along and near the major road corridors and roads that intersect Route 422, Route 562, Route 662 and Shelbourne Road. Population pressures from the Reading area and greater Philadelphia area continues.

Mt. Penn Borough and Lower Alsace Township Joint Comprehensive Plan

A Comprehensive Plan is being prepared for Mt. Penn Borough and Lower Alsace Township. The Future Land Use Plan within that plan is consistent with the land uses shown on the Future Land Use Plan for the St. Lawrence, Exeter, Amity Plan.

Route 422 and Schuylkill Valley Metro Issue

PennDOT has prepared a study of the Route 422 corridor. The study addressed a number of problem areas in the existing corridor. As development pressures mount and the amount of traffic utilizing the corridor increases, the development of a bypass to the existing corridor will need to be addressed. The County's Berks Vision 2020 identifies the need to address the corridor in its intermediate range (not scheduled with PennDOT but reasonably completed with the plan horizon. Until such a bypass can be completed, municipalities will need to address the functionality of the existing corridor to ensure that all issues related to safety and congestion are adequately addressed. Also, if and when a bypass becomes a reality, municipalities will need to address the function of the existing corridor to ensure that it is consistent with regional land use visions.

Concept plans prepared for improving Route 422, including improvements to the existing corridor and potential by-pass routes within Exeter Township, will have to be discussed by the region's municipalities and the Reading Area Transportation Study to prioritize projects for funding. Funding is not assured, as competing corridors include Route 222 and I-78.

Preliminary studies have been completed for the Schuylkill Valley Metro, a proposed rail line linking the Reading area to Philadelphia. The development of such a rail line, if constructed, will have a direct impact on the region. These impacts could include the number of potential riders accessing local streets and roads to access the proposed station, and the completion of the rail line could also spur additional residential, commercial, office and light industrial development in the area. Municipalities will need to continue to monitor current land use policies and zoning to ensure that potential impacts from the development of the rail line can be appropriately accommodated.