

CHAPTER 3

OVERVIEW OF THE ST. LAWRENCE, EXETER AND AMITY REGION

Villages

Unique rural settlements are found in the region, such as Limekiln, Stonersville, Amityville, Monocacy, and Yellow House. They have mixed use, small town character, and maintaining that character and their vitality is important.

Churches

Rural churches such as Exeter Friends Meeting House and St. Paul's United Church of Christ have played an important religious and social role in the community for almost two centuries.

Neversink Mountain

Neversink Mountain plays many roles: scenic resource, wildlife habitat, watershed, recreational resource for hiking, and environmental moderator of runoff, sedimentation and pollution.

Trails

The Region has a nucleus of trails such as the Thun Trail, those on Neversink Mountain, and Monocacy Hill, trails in the Daniel Boone Homestead, and the trail along the Schuylkill River in the area of the Trout Run Recreation Area and River Bend Park in Exeter Township. Additional trails can link these trails; link the Region's villages and the Borough; link the Region's recreational and historic resources; and link residential subdivisions, workplaces, and elements of the circulation system. Analysis of and designation of routes will be necessary.

Agricultural Land

Agriculture is a contributor to the Region's economy, a major land use, and provides rural atmosphere to the St. Lawrence, Exeter and Amity region. Exeter and Amity Townships contain agricultural security areas and farms for which conservation easements have been purchased. Exeter Township has effective agricultural zoning. While public support for continued rural areas in the Region is strong, continuation of family farms in the Region cannot always be assured.

Recreational Opportunities

There are a variety of recreational opportunities in St. Lawrence, Exeter and Amity area. The Daniel Boone Homestead, Monocacy Hill, school district facilities and a variety of municipal facilities are complemented by active and passive opportunities along the Schuylkill River and streams and commercial recreational facilities. An important need is to provide additional active recreational facilities for the youth of the area. In the provision, management and scheduling of recreational facilities within St. Lawrence, Exeter and Amity, regional cooperation can be a plus.

Borough Center

St. Lawrence historically has been a residential community with supportive commercial facilities and limited industrial uses. It is expected to continue to play this role in the future. To maintain the vitality of the Borough, need for revitalization efforts should be monitored along the Borough's "Main Streets". Other keys to the continued vitality of the Borough are appropriate adaptive re-use of any vacated industrial and commercial buildings, managing traffic on its streets, regulating conversion of existing single family dwellings, and meeting needs of its elderly.

Schuylkill River

The Schuylkill River was important in the development of Berks County. Its importance in transportation and industrial development has lessened, but its importance for recreation continues to increase, as evidenced by interest in constructing trails and parks along the River.

Route 422

Route 422 links the St. Lawrence, Exeter and Amity region to other portions of the State and its interchanges have provided stimulus to economic development. On the other hand, traffic in the Region increases as people drive to and exit the expressway. Traffic congestion and safety is a major problem, tying up traffic, damaging the road, and highlighting the need for coordinated corridor management in the Region. Traffic especially impacts the commercial area of Exeter Township and the Village of Douglasville. Exeter and Amity have experienced commercial and/or industrial development along the corridor, and this development will continue in the future. Proper land use allocation and management of traffic patterns is key along the corridor.

Route 662

Route 662 in Amity is another major road in the region. Access management is crucial to promoting mobility and safety. Route 662 carries substantial through traffic, but is narrow and has inadequate shoulder and bridge widths for the volumes and truck traffic it

experiences. The Route 662 and 422 intersection at the north end of the Village of Douglasville is of particular concern to area drivers, but is under the jurisdiction of PennDOT. As additional residential, commercial and industrial development occurs along Route 662, intersections with the northern portion of the road will be of increasing concern. Such development could also affect the scenic character of portions of this road, which links many of the settlements, recreation resources, and historic sites in the Township.

Public Utilities

The greatest population and business concentration is found along and north of the Route 422 corridor in Exeter and Amity Townships. This is made possible by public sewer and water service. In the future, public sewer could be used to concentrate growth around the areas so served. A key issue is to restrict extension of public sewer into those areas planned for agriculture, open space and rural character.

Residential Growth

To retain the remaining rural/suburban character of St. Lawrence, Exeter and Amity, housing development must be managed and sprawl prevented. Residents do not want to experience overdevelopment and the resultant traffic, infrastructure, tax and quality of life consequences of that overdevelopment. Concentrating reasonable growth near existing centers such as St. Lawrence and Douglasville is essential to managing growth.

Alternative Modes of Travel

Concern about traffic on roads helps to build support for alternative modes of travel, including rail service to Reading; bus service on Route 422 to the Reading area; bus and paratransit service within the region connecting the villages and Borough and residents to commercial and recreational uses, with particular concern for the mobility of the elderly and youth; park and ride facilities at major roads and near the Borough and villages and at multi-modal facilities such as the possible Schuylkill Valley Metro train station; and additional walking and bicycling trails.

The residents of St. Lawrence, Exeter and Amity highly value the character, open spaces and natural, historic and recreational resources of the region, and a challenge of this plan will be to preserve these resources for current and future generations.

