

Norristown council reviews Lafayette Street expansion plan

By [Carl Rotenberg](#), The Times Herald

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NORRISTOWN >> The next phase of reconstructing and widening Lafayette Street, between Barbadoes Street and Ford Street, was presented Tuesday to the Norristown council and residents by staff members of the Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC).

The four-lane widening of Lafayette Street with a center island will run from the bridge over Saw Mill Run to Ford Street.

The Lafayette Street reconstruction project will include the relocation of the Schuylkill River Trail off of the raised viaduct to an at-grade location between Mill Street to Franklin Street. Construction is slated to begin in early 2017 and conclude in early 2018. Phase 3 is projected to cost about \$35 million, said Matthew Edmond, the transportation section chief of the MCPC.

“The entire project was dreamed up about 15 years ago to connect all the area roadways into Norristown,” he said. “The turnpike commission recently built a cashless toll system in Bristol.

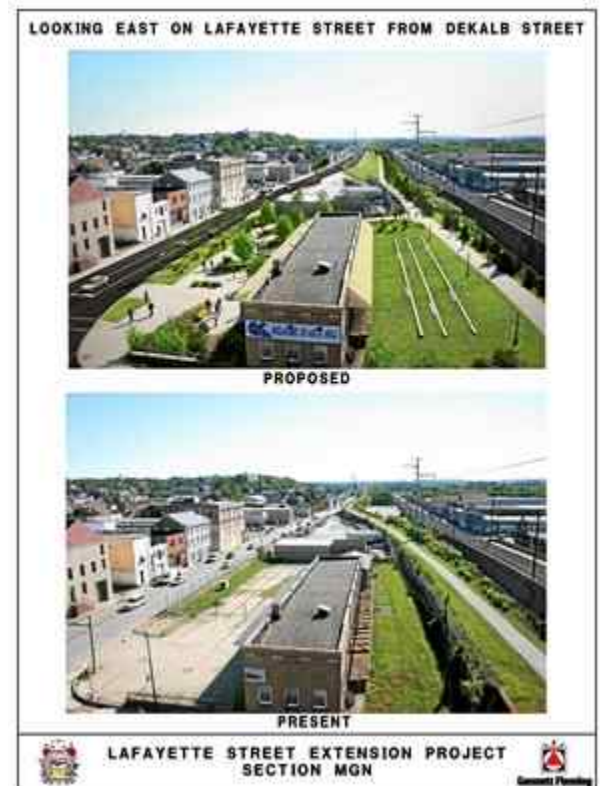
That kind of cashless system will allow them to build the turnpike interchange and connect it to Lafayette Street more cheaply.”

The turnpike commission has not yet funded the turnpike interchange.

The traffic light at Franklin Street and Lafayette will be eliminated, and a new traffic light will be added at the Ford Street intersection. Ford Street will become a two-way street, between Main Street and Lafayette, and on-street parking on that block will be eliminated.

“At the Norristown Strawberry Walkway we will put a rapid flashing beacon telling motorists it is a pedestrian crossing,” said Susan Giannantonio, the consultant project manager.

The sidewalk on Lafayette Street will be widened for homeowners on the north side of the street, she said.



The bottom photo shows the current conditions of the Schuylkill River Trail at DeKalb Street and the Montgomery County-owned freight depot station. The building will eventually be converted to a trail support building with public bathrooms but funding for that project has not been obtained yet. The top photo shows where the Chester County Trail will loop around to connect to the Schuylkill River Trail and how the trail will look in the background. March 1, 2016. Submitted photo

“Right now trucks use Franklin Street when they come westbound on Main Street. That traffic will be redirected to Ford Street,” she said.

The trail will be moved a little farther from the roadway and there will be trail connections at Franklin and Walnut streets.

“This road expansion will make this area a great hub for transportation,” she said.

Edmond said that nearly 1,000 people use the trail each day, according to a recent user count.

A grassy linear park will be built along the trail between the rebuilt Lafayette Street and the Schuylkill River Trail.

Edmond said the county was looking for additional grant money to renovate the freight station so it will be usable for bicycle riders and runners.

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Council member Olivia Brady called it “a very exciting project.”

Edmond said that parking spaces were added to the project in response to requests from residents and business owners.

Council Vice President Derrick Perry asked whether side streets would be improved by the project. Edmond said they were not part of the project.

The first phase of the Lafayette Street project widened the roadway from Ford Street to Conshohocken State Road in Plymouth. It was completed in 2014. The second phase of the project is currently rebuilding a section of Ridge Pike, Diamond Avenue and Fairfield Road in Plymouth.

A project overview of the Lafayette Street Extension Project with additional photos and maps is at www.montcopa.org/index.aspx?nid=1058.

“Lafayette Street is your street. It is owned by Norristown,” Edmond said. “We are building this on your behalf.”

Contact Carl Rotenberg at 267-907-6137 (c) and 484-679-8476.