

A CONCEPTUAL STUDY FOR A ROSE VALLEY ROAD PATHWAY

ROSE VALLEY, PA

Final Package– August 7, 2020 – Version 5



How do we make walking and bicycling safe and delightful on Rose Valley Road?

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A. Executive Summary

Regarding walking and bicycling safely and enjoyably, Rose Valley faces a significant problem shared by numerous other historic suburban communities – it’s missing a pathway or even a walking path along its “Main Street”, Rose Valley Road.

This conceptual study examines how this problem came about, and several concepts to be considered for solving it.

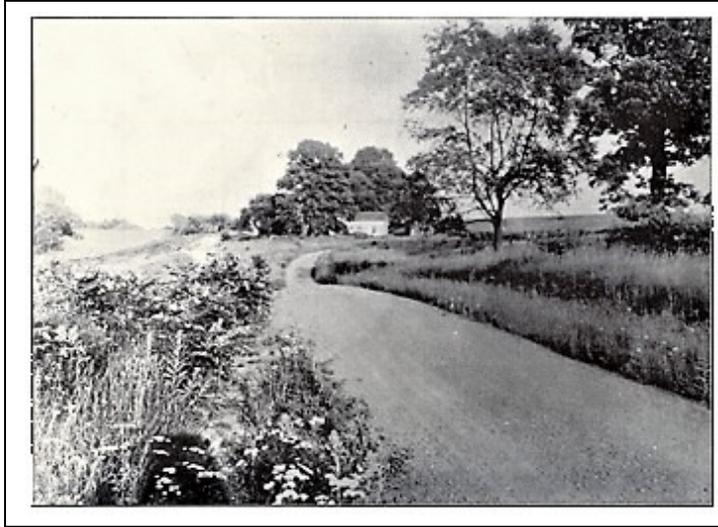


B. Background, Development, and Current Conditions of Rose Valley Road

The present-day Rose Valley Road crosses the “Great Minquas Path,” which linked Native American towns on the Susquehanna with Dutch trading ships docked near what later became Philadelphia. See the explanation on the monument that is right along Rose Valley Road within the Borough.

Over time Rose Valley Road developed as an important, but unpaved road in the colonial period. In the 18th, 19th and early 20th century Rose Valley Road and numerous similar roads were equally inviting to pedestrians, horses, wagons, trolley lines and later bicycles.

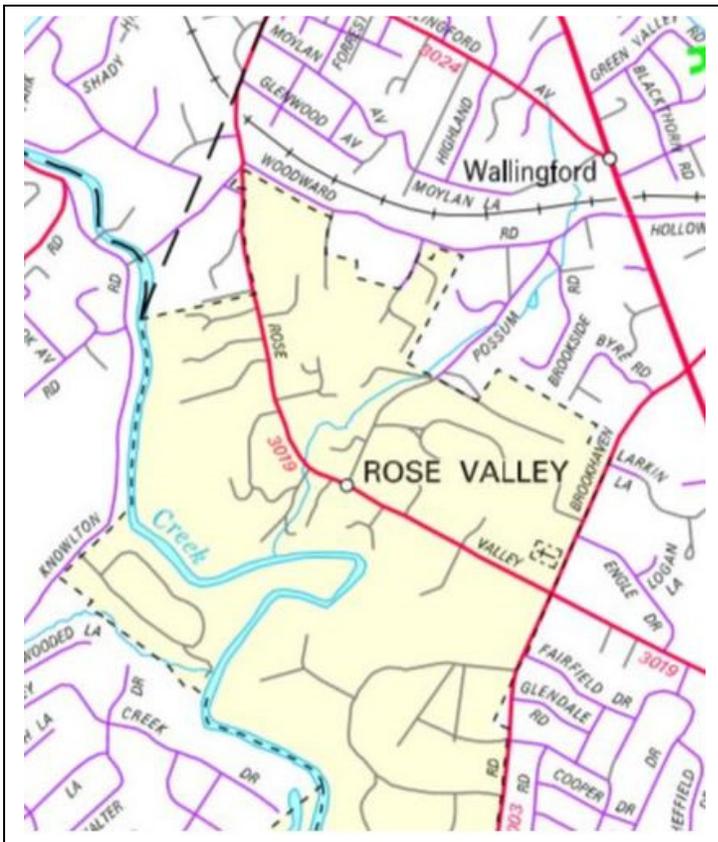
After World War I, the 1920’s saw an explosion in automobile ownership and the paving of many main roads such as Rose Valley Road. However, by this time development patterns, roadway right-of-way widths were already established, leaving little room for safe travel other than by motor vehicles. Travel on foot or bicycle became unsafe and unpleasant.



The photo to the left was taken in Rose Valley about the year 1900. At that time, all roads were “country roads”, including Rose Valley Road, and there was no reason for a side pathway. Wagon traffic was much slower and infrequent than today’s motor vehicle traffic.

Working in the PennDOT Right-of-Way and the Historic Context of Rose Valley

Unlike other states such as Virginia where most all roads are controlled by the state, Pennsylvania has a mix of state or “PennDOT” highways and local roads. On the map to the left, PennDOT highways are shown in red – these include Rose Valley Road and Brookhaven Road. What are the impacts of this designation to the development of the Rose Valley Road Pathway?



Unlike improvements to Borough roads, which are controlled by the Borough, work within the Right of Way of Rose Valley will require close coordination with PennDOT, and conformance with all its rules, regulations, and design and construction standards. With the rise in recent years of interest in what is known as “Active Transportation”, PennDOT has shown its commitment to walking and bicycling improvements where possible.

While many historic PennDOT rights-of-way are 33’, Council members reported a right-of-way of 36.5’ to 40’, which may possibly allow enough right-of-way for a side pathway. However, there are many fences, trees, mailboxes, and the like within the public right-of-way that must

be considered in the pathway’s design. However, if, following a detailed survey, it appears there is adequate public right-of-way for the pathway, this will help with negotiations with adjacent property owners. See photographs in the next two sections with adjacent comments.

This project will help to address the conflict between the takeover of many area roads by motor traffic versus the original vision of Will Price, the Arts and Crafts Movement, and the existing

pathway system to keep Rose Valley connected, quaint and convivial. Rose Valley transferred responsibility for Rose Valley Road to the Department of Highways, now PennDOT, some time ago, leading to its widening, and more frequent and better paving. This in turn has led to faster and more aggressive driving and higher traffic volumes that make walking and bicycling unsafe and unpleasant. Rose Valley Road has become an arterial route for motor traffic to Media, Swarthmore, and other nearby communities.

With no sidepaths along Rose Valley Road there are few ways, if any, for residents and other pedestrians to reach or appreciate the many points of interest and activity along the road. This situation in turn leads to more people driving even short distances, and adding even more traffic.

Current Opportunities and Support for Making Rose Valley Road a “Complete Street”

A “complete street” is one that accommodates all travel modes – motorized and non-motorized. However, Rose Valley Road has become a barrier to non-motorized mobility. With the new pathway, the community seeks ways to reconnect the entire community — across Rose Valley Road as well as along its axis.

To address the current failure of Rose Valley Road to serve all users, prior studies, such as the Delaware County Open Space, Recreation, and Greenway Plan prepared in 2015 by the County with consultants Tim Wilson, Ann Toole and Campbell Thomas & Co. recommend a pathway connecting Nether Providence to Rose Valley and Media via Rose Valley Road. Also, there is very strong community support for the pathway concepts advanced by the Plan. And, while the development of a sidepath along Rose Valley Road will require a complete Feasibility Study, it’s clear from the successful development of similar improvements in comparable communities, and from our over 40 years of experience developing such improvements that such a project is feasible.

Multiple grant sources are readily available for such an important and beneficial project including:

The PA Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources Community Conservation and Partnership Program Grants (C2P2)

The PA Dept. of Community and Economic Development’s Greenways, Trails and Recreation Program Grants (GTRP), as well as their larger Multi-Modal Program Grants. PennDOT also has similar Multi-Modal Program Grants

DVRPC’s Regional Trails Program Grants, funded largely by the William Penn Foundation

The PA Dept. of Health has “WalkWorks” Grant to help with mapping and planning of walking routes and networks. Several Delaware County communities have already made use of these.

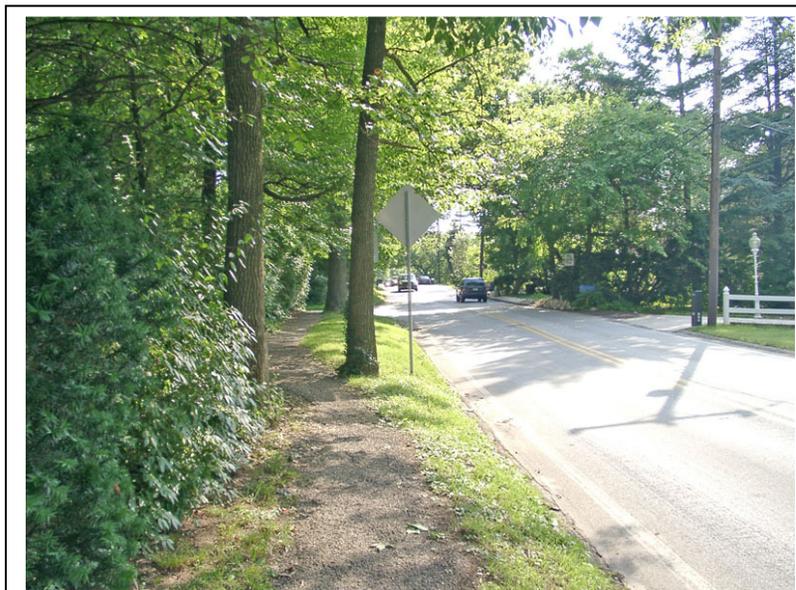
There are much larger federal grants as well. Oftentimes multiple projects in different municipalities team up for the larger amounts of funding with a regional significance.

Liability and Property Owner Considerations

From the municipal point of view, Rose Valley already has certain liability for conditions along Rose Valley Road. Making the road a “complete street” will create a much safer condition which lowers liability for both the municipality and adjacent property owners. For owners that grant an easement for a pathway or sidepath, Pennsylvania provides a Limitation of Liability law. Finally, research in this part of Pennsylvania and elsewhere shows that providing a walkable and bikeable environment increases the value of real estate in the community.

C. Project Objectives

- The Pathway is intended to provide safe, inviting pedestrian and bicycle access along Rose Valley Road from the Moylan-Rose Valley Rail Station south to the Brookhaven Rd. SEPTA Bus Stop. All property adjacent to Rose Valley Rd. is in Rose Valley Borough, except on the west side of Rose Valley Rd from Pew Park, eastward ~ 300 feet in Nether Providence Twp.
- The Pathway should have a smooth surface, and be walkable in dress shoes, as many residents and visitors will be coming and going to the Borough by train and bus.
- Special care shall be taken in the Pathway's design to respect the historic character of Rose Valley Road, including its trees, fencing, walls, buildings, bridges and other character-defining features.
- Where necessary to allow for Pathway construction, such features shall be moved in a manner that they will look as though they had always been in their new location.
- No work will be designed or constructed without the participation and involvement of adjacent property owners.
- As with other historic roads and pathways, the design for a multi-use sidepath, generally a minimum of 8-10' in width, shall be adjusted where necessary to respect the Pathway's neighbors and context.
- The Pathway's design shall consider closely the use of firm and stable materials requiring a minimum of maintenance, while respecting the character of the Pathway and the Borough.
- The Pathway's design shall be environmentally sensitive, considering the preservation of trees, landscaping and historic features as well as stormwater management and access for the disabled through compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.



A side path on Croton Road in Montgomery County PA give access to pedestrians to a local school along a PennDOT highway, while preserving trees.

D. Opportunities and Constraints

Providing a **safe, attractive way to walk or bicycle** along Rose Valley Road will go a long way to making the Borough quite walkable and bikeable. Many of the side roads coming into Rose Valley Road are local dead ends with a minimum of traffic. Most of these side roads are already safe and attractive for non-motorists, and give access to numerous homes and cultural facilities.

The Pathway will provide a **seamless link to SEPTA's** excellent train and bus service, giving residents and visitors more travel options. More ridership will lead to better service.

Creating a "Main Street" that is a **destination for walking and bicycling** because of the character that is designed into the Pathway.

Such a pathway will **add to property values**, as have other pathways and trails in the vicinity such as the Radnor Trail and the Schuylkill River Trail.

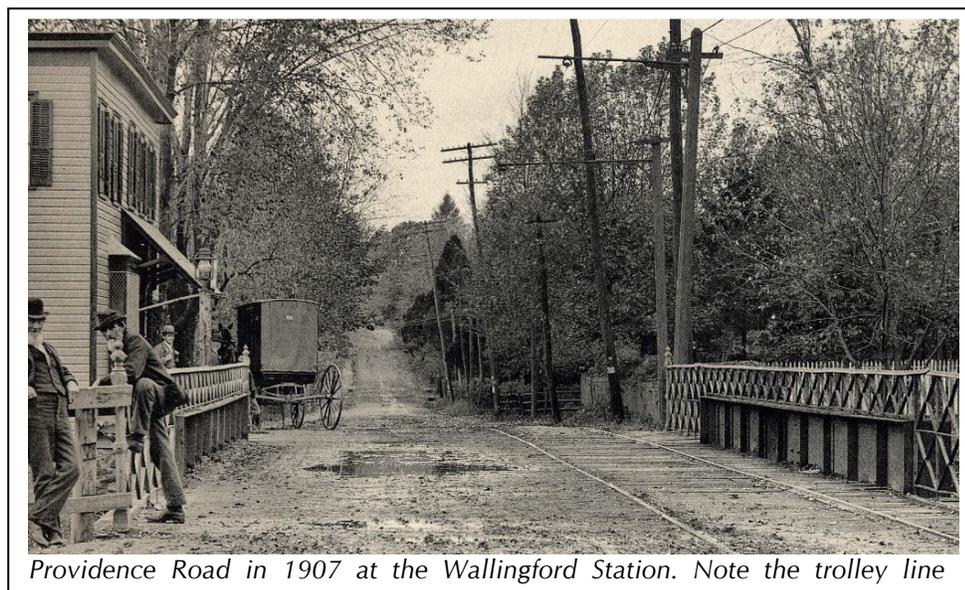
The design planning and construction of the Pathway gives an opportunity **to improve stormwater management** along the corridor.

The creation of the Pathway in a manner that respects to the extent possible fences, walls, landscaping, trees, and other character defining features provides an **opportunity to repair and maintain** many of these elements of Rose Valley Road.

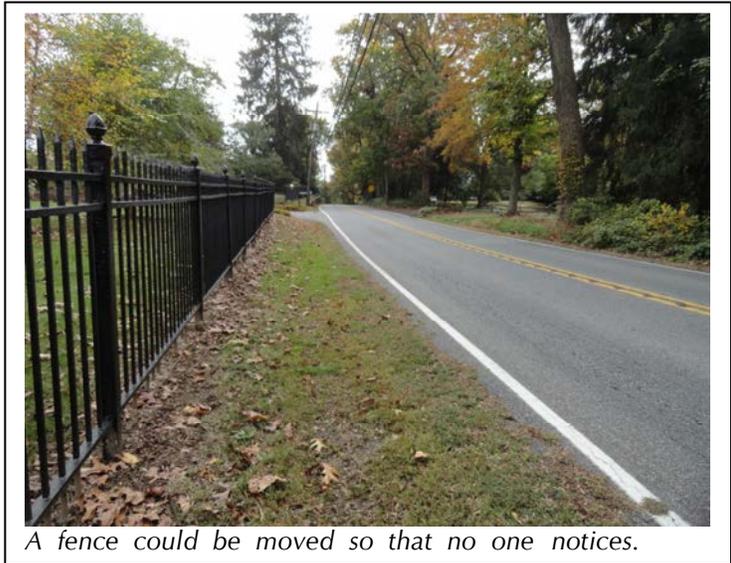
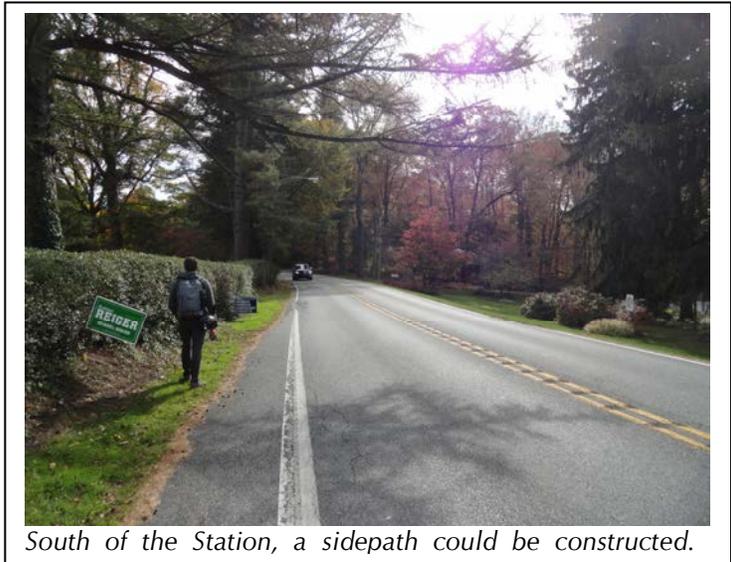
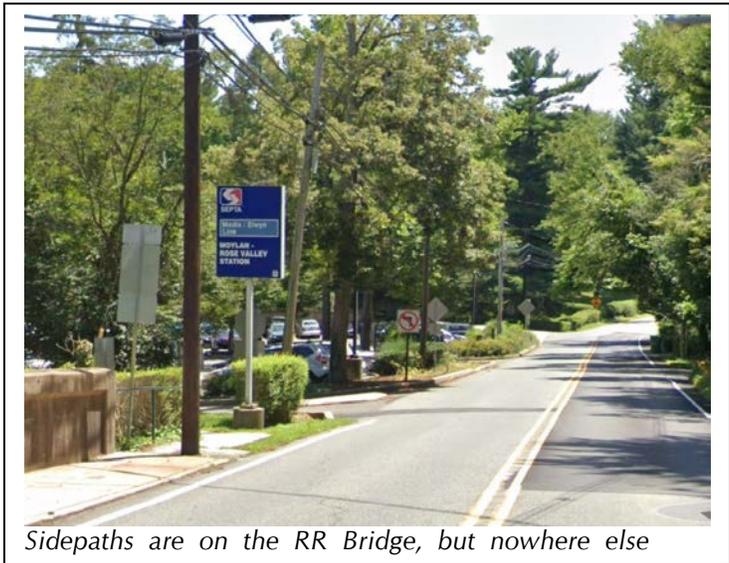
By making it easier for all resident to visit the key institutions along Rose Valley Road, there will be both an increase in equity, as well as a **strengthening of these institutions**.

Rose Valley Road is **constrained in numerous locations** by buildings that are very close to the road, or properties that have significant ornamental fences, walls, trees and landscaping close to the wall. Relocating such items in an aesthetically pleasing way is generally doable, but at considerable expense.

There are **numerous property owners** between the Rail Station and Brookhaven Road. Negotiations for right-of-way may take some time, and some property owners will require significant attention and negotiations.

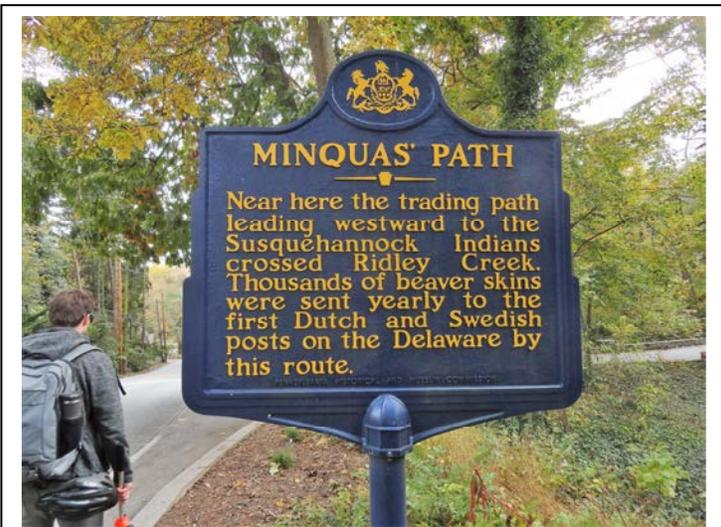


Here are a few views with commentary on the next pages showing existing conditions along Rose Valley Road, travelling from the SEPTA Rail Station south to Brookhaven Road

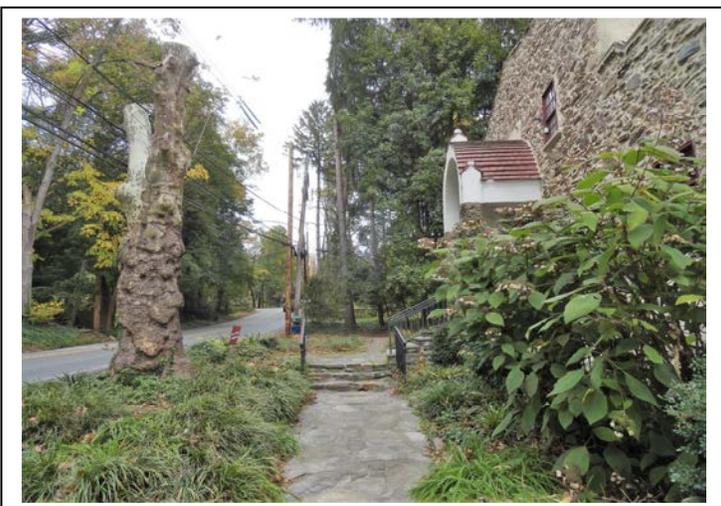




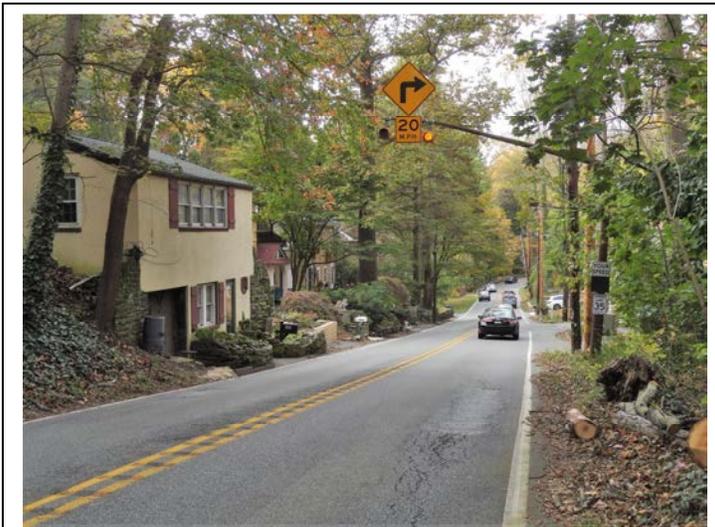
A Pathway can give better ped/bike access to local institutions.



Historic sites abound – and you'll be able to stop!



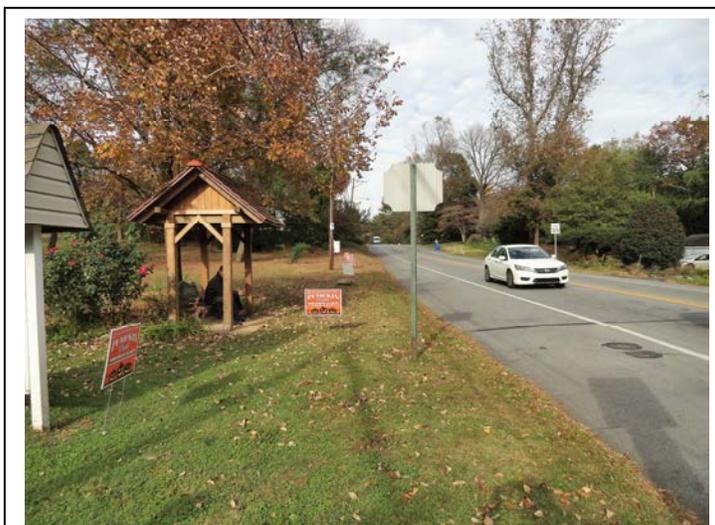
The Pathway and this path must be ADA accessible to the extent possible.



Very tight conditions will require special design.



.The Pathway could go where these trees have died.



The Pathway will link to the Brookhaven Rd bus stop.

E Design Alternatives and other Examples for Rose Valley Road

How might the Rose Valley Pathway appear? A few illustrations follow of other pathways with similar design issues, showing how they might be solved on the Rose Valley Pathway.

While many of these solutions may now appear obvious, they were often worked out with extensive negotiations with the private owners, thorough public involvement in meetings and design sessions, and sometimes great controversy.

a. Side Path Examples:



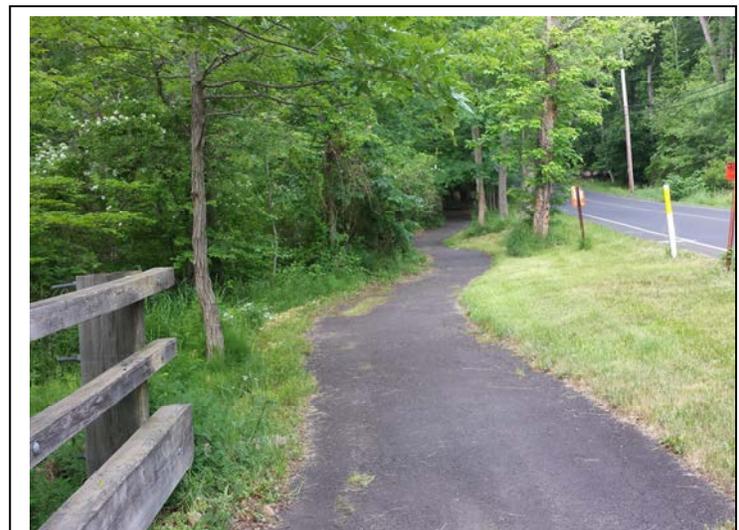
The pathway is separated from close-by properties by a board fence. The roadway would benefit from trees.



The pathway moves closer to the road to squeeze past a barn.



These buggies in Perry County PA use the highway's shoulder as a side path grass "paving"



The pathway winds among the trees to keep separate from traffic and to preserve the wooded character.

- b. Preserving trees and plants with a new sidepath:** Integrating a pathway along Rose Valley Road will require care and attention to trees and landscaping, both to preserve the character of the road's viewshed, but also to protect the trees, shrubs and ground cover that help to define Rose Valley's character. Here are some examples from other suburban communities in Pennsylvania and New Jersey which successfully solved similar challenges to those found in Rose Valley in their own communities.



A bridge was constructed to carry the sidepath over the roots, and thus protect this magnificent tree.



The landscaping along this sidepath is not only attractive, but gives the user a sense of separation.



This grassy "bench" by a busy highway offers an opportunity for a sidepath



Here a sidepath was inserted while maintaining a grassy buffer with a curb to provide good separation.

- c. Transformative Paths:** While sidepaths and pathways can help protect a community's natural and historic assets, they can also be transformative. While this example from the East Coast Greenway in an industrial part of Philadelphia is not in the suburban context of Rose Valley, it shows that a well-planned pathway can transform an area, much as the Rose Valley Pathway has the potential to build a fully walkable, bikeable community.



BEFORE: A gritty section of Delaware Avenue in Philadelphia with no provision for walkers and bikers



AFTER: The road has been narrowed, and trees, landscaping, and a multi-use sidepath installed.

- d. Cycle Tracks:** A “cycle track” is a protected two-way bicycle facility, almost always separated where necessary by a strong barrier for motor vehicles. They are often constructed within an existing roadway, leaving and creating a pathway for pedestrians. Adding in public transit and full accessibility, one is then creating a “complete street.”



A cycle track has been inserted in the roadway, and a separate sidepath retained along this roadway

F . APPENDIX: Preliminary Alternatives / Future Feasibility Study / Long-term Timeline

Following the submission and review of the Draft Report a number of corrections and updates were made to the Report. The Report then engendered additional comments, ideas, suggestions, and requests, which have been incorporated into either the body of this Report, or which appear below in this Appendix.

- a. **Ideas Submitted for Alternate Routes.** Many people in Rose Valley are eager to get something done to improve access for pedestrians and bicyclists, and to connect all parts of the community with each other and with major sites. As a result, several preliminary alternatives for locating the Pathway were recently submitted. While these ideas have not been studied in detail or subjected to a typical detailed field view and public involvement process, they are presented below with the understanding that they would be among the alternatives to be reviewed in a future detailed Feasibility Study. Here they are as supplied to the consultant, shown in *italics*. No response is given, as this will require a detailed analysis as part of the proposed Feasibility Study.

There are many ways for the Rose Valley community to achieve the goal of safe pedestrian passage along Rose Valley Road. Alternative Route 1 is an idea for a comprehensive pathway to provide safe multimodal passage along and across Rose Valley Road, linking the SEPTA Rail stop (at Woodward Road) to the SEPTA Bus stop (at Brookhaven Road) — including important points of interest along the way, such as: The Old Mill, the Saul Wildlife Sanctuary, Hedgerow Theatre, The School in Rose Valley, the Rose Valley Swim & Tennis Club, and The Rose Valley Museum at Thunderbird Lodge. Alternative Route 2, 3, and 4 illustrate less ambitious options to show openness to potential permitting limitations, flexibility based on funding opportunities, and outcomes from community workshops during the Feasibility Study.

Alternative Route 1

Locate the sidepath on the northeast side from the train station to the three way stop at the corner of Pew Park. Then cross from the park protected by the stop sign to the southwest side of Rose Valley Road. From there, much of the property on the southwest side is wooded as opposed to developed and landscaped on the northeast side. There are not many retaining walls or fences to move, and houses are set back further on the southwest side. Much of the land on the southwest side is public land, whereas none is public on the northeast side. This could avoid lots of negotiations, which could take lots of time, money and consultant fees. School Lane and The Rose Valley Museum at Thunderbird Lodge would be accessible directly from the sidepath. At Traymore, enter the Borough property on the southwest side of the Traymore Avenue Bridge, where there is an existing Rose Valley Borough sidepath. Continue past the old Gate House ruins (the rustic steps installed by the scouts would need improvements), and cross over Vernon Run on the existing bridge over Vernon Run. (No new bridge required.) Continue on the southwest side along the Rose Valley Borough Village Green. At a point opposite Possum Hollow, install a crosswalk to the northeast corner of the intersection. This crosswalk might have flashing lights for pedestrian traffic similar to the one that was recently installed on the corner of Yale and Harvard in Swarthmore. This crosswalk would provide safe walking access across Rose Valley Road with adequate sight lines, and would connect the two halves of the Borough. (It would also be beneficial to install un-signaled pedestrian crosswalks at several of the feeder streets along Rose Valley

Road to give residents on both sides access to the new sidepath. By doing this, The Old Mill, the Saul Wildlife Sanctuary, The School in Rose Valley, and The Rose Valley Museum will become walkable destinations for those who live on the northeast side. For those on the southwest side, the Hedgerow Theatre and the swimming pool and tennis club will become walkable destinations. All will have access to both the train station and the bus station.) From Possum Hollow Road, the sidepath would run to Brookhaven Road on the northeast side, providing safe walking conditions for residents up and down the corridor as well as students going between Hedgerow Theater and the Studio House at all hours of the day and night. The sidepath would end at the bus stop at the corner of Brookhaven.

Alternative Route 2

While ideally a “Phase I” segment, another option could be to have the sidepath run only from Woodward Road to Hedgerow Theatre, per the example described in the study. This would allow people to walk to and from the Moylan-Rose Valley Train Station and Hedgerow Theatre and make it convenient for Traymore residents to walk to and from the train station. This is currently where a lot of pedestrian traffic occurs along Rose Valley Road and would be a major undertaking for the Borough and a huge improvement. The sidepath could extend to Old Mill Lane by putting a pedestrian bridge across Vernon Run running parallel to the stone bridge on Rose Valley Road — this could also be saved for a later phase. Note: It has been speculated that it could be difficult to put a pathway through the area around Possum Hollow Road in the vicinity of the mill worker houses since the houses are so close to the road.

Alternative Route 3

Another manageable option is the idea of a walking sidepath set back from the road, which would only be four or five feet wide, perhaps made of earth-colored macadam, and not intended for bicycles. It is speculated that this option may fit better with the residential character of the community and the lay of the land.

Alternative Route 4

Another option to consider is a paved surface adjacent to the road for walking. This is how Nether Providence improved the walkability of Possum Hollow Road from Providence Road to Wallingford Train Station. This would be a big improvement from existing conditions and has the advantage of not requiring additional easements since PennDOT already has at least five feet next to the road within its right-of-way (ROW). It is also possible PennDOT would widen the road at the request of the Borough at no charge. Although this alternative is not ideal, it would be a quick and easy way to improve the walkability of Rose Valley Road. Note: It would need to be clear to what extent the Borough could enforce keeping the PennDOT ROW clear of obstructions. In some places the sidepath may have to be adjacent to the road because it is simply not practical to put the sidepath elsewhere due to houses close to the road.

- b. **Future Feasibility Study.** The purposes of this brief Conceptual Study were two-fold: (1) to see if the Borough would like to investigate in more detail moving forward with the development of a side-path within the Rose Valley Road corridor, and (2) to provide background materials to aid with obtaining funds needed for the project’s next step, a detailed Feasibility Study.

Here is a chart of what typically would be included in such a Feasibility Study for this project:

						Proposed Outline – Detailed Feasibility Study
						Rose Valley Road Sidepath
						Rose Valley Borough, Delaware County, PA
						A Feasibility Study
						A. Introduction and Purpose
						1. Background
						2. Purpose, Goals and Objectives
						3. The Study Committee
						4. The Consultant Team
						5. Delineation of Study Area
						a. General mapping of the study area.
						b. Boundaries & Limits of the study.
						B. Legal Feasibility
						1. Ownership conditions along the Proposed Routes
						2. Adjacent Land Ownership and Impact
						3. Assessment of Legal Feasibility
						C. Potential Sidepath Use and Demand
						1. General Demographics of Potential Sidepath Users.
						a. Population Information and Demographic Patterns
						b. Community zones and character
						c. Potential Users
						• Local Users
						• Regional Users
						• Tourists/Visitors
						d. Potential Sidepath Users by Type (bikers, walkers, parents with young children, cross country skiers, disabled users, etc.).
						2. Potential Demand and Use of the Sidepath
						a. Estimate initial usage levels.
						b. Project future usage levels.
						c. Estimate seasonal demand versus year-round demand.
						3. Potential Links & Connectors
						a. Connections to local sites, services, schools, attractions, and neighborhoods for both recreational and commuter use by residents and employees
						b. Local & Regional Trail Connections.
						4. Compatibility of Sidepath Development with Adjacent Land Uses.

						a. A potential impact on adjacent land uses (cultural properties, school facilities, businesses, residences, houses of worship, and such)
						D. Physical Inventory and Assessment of the Proposed Route(s)
						1. Proposed Alternatives Alignment mapping
						2. Physiographic Analysis
						a. Potential lengths and ROW of proposed sidepath routes
						b. Topography and Slope Conditions
						c. ROW conditions (materials and integrity)
						d. Surrounding land use
						e. Erosion and drainage concerns along the sidepath routes
						3. Natural Features Inventory -- Identify and map:
						a. Mapping showing adjacent or intersecting waterways; significant natural features (ponds, rock outcroppings, wetlands, floodplains, etc.); existing vegetation and wildlife habitat (identify any species of concern or sensitive habitat areas in the project area and/or the existence of aggressive, weedy species/major invasive plants).
						4. Wildlife Analysis within the Corridor.
						a. PA Natural Diversity Index (PNDI) search results
						b. Wildlife such as raccoons that may be harmful to sidepath users; habitats that may be negatively impacted.
						c. Wildlife crossings, such a nighttime use by deer
						5. Structures within the Corridor.
						a. General assessment of existing structures proposed for sidepath use (bridges, culverts, etc.)
						b. Potential sidepath encroachments or conflicts.
						6. Infrastructure and Utilities.
						a. Potential Utility or Infrastructure Conflicts
						b. Available Utilities that may serve sidepath use.
						7. Intersections and Access Points.
						a. Mapping of existing road crossings, active SEPTA lines, driveways, etc.
						b. Mapping of access points located along the potential sidepath routes
						8. Environmental Hazards.
						a. Recommendation for a Phase I Environmental Assessment for Recognized Environmental Contaminants
						E. The Rose Valley Road Sidepath - A Concept Plan
						1. Recommended Sidepath Route mapping and description Plan map should

						identify the:
						a. Sidepath location and any alternative routes within municipalities;
						b. Proposed location of trailheads and related facilities (restroom, water, emergency telephone, lighting, parking, maintenance, etc.);
						c. Areas for sidepath barriers and emergency access;
						d. Areas needing natural buffers and/or screening
						e. Proposed linkages to parks, schools, neighborhoods, etc.
						2. Conceptual Sidepath Construction Details
						a. Typical Sidepath Construction Details
						• Recommended Sidepath Construction Type(s)
						• Typical ADA recommendations
						• Mixed uses safety controls
						3. Conceptual Planning for auxiliary facilities where needed
						• Access control
						• Scenic Views
						• Rest Areas
						• Parking Facilities
						• Fencing and Buffers
						• Drainage and Stormwater Management
						• Emergency vehicle access
						• ADA compliant facilities
						F. Sidepath Operation, Maintenance, and Security
						1. Ownership/maintenance/management options and entities.
						2. Potential roles of public and non-public agencies.
						3. Areas for in-kind contributions from involved entities.
						4. Proposed organizational structure to provide sidepath maintenance, operation and security.
						5. Typical sidepath maintenance - routine and periodic.
						G. Financial Feasibility
						1. Assessment of ROW acquisition or purchase costs.
						2. Opinion of Probable Cost of Sidepath Development.
						3. Phased Implementation Plan
						4. Examples of typical management and maintenance budgets from similar sidepath projects
						5. Potential funding sources for capital and operating revenues.
						H. Public Participation
						1. Study Committee Coordination and Meetings
						2. Property Owner and Resident Coordination and Meetings

						3. Coordination and Meetings with Rose Valley, adjacent municipalities and the County involved in or impacted by the Sidepath Development.
						4. Significant Stakeholder Meetings and Interviews
						5. Public Presentations and Workshops.

c. Projected Long-term Project Timeline: The numerous factors and decisions that impact the long-term project timeline for the Rose Valley Road Sidepath make it impossible to predict a completion date at this time. Such detailed planning and scheduling will be done as part of the Feasibility Study. However, based on our experience with dozens of such project, here is an early projection of the steps and time needed. Note that local conditions, cooperation with property owners, availability of funds, and special interest on the part of funding sources and/or donors can shorten or lengthen this very general projection.

Planning for the Feasibility Study and locating Matching Funds for Grants: Summer and Fall 2020; simultaneously hold early meetings to inform citizens, property owners and stakeholder that a Feasibility Study is being planned.

Grant Applications for the Feasibility Study: First half of 2021. Awards are generally announced in the last quarter of the year, i.e. fall 2021 or early winter 2022

Contract between the Borough and the Grant Agency(s) for the Feasibility Study, and Consultant Selection Process: First half 2022

Preparation of the Detailed Feasibility Study: 12 to 18 months. Complete, say, by the end of 2023

Apply for Acquisition and Construction Grants: 12 months through 2024.

Preparation of Bidding and Construction Documents and Permitting with the Borough, as well as State and Federal Agencies: 12 months through 2025

Bidding to Qualified Contractors, and Contract Award: First four month of 2026

Construction: through the construction season of 2026, concluding late fall 2026.