

Borough of Wellsboro – Charleston Township – Delmar Township

Wellsboro Enhancement Strategy and Mobility Plan



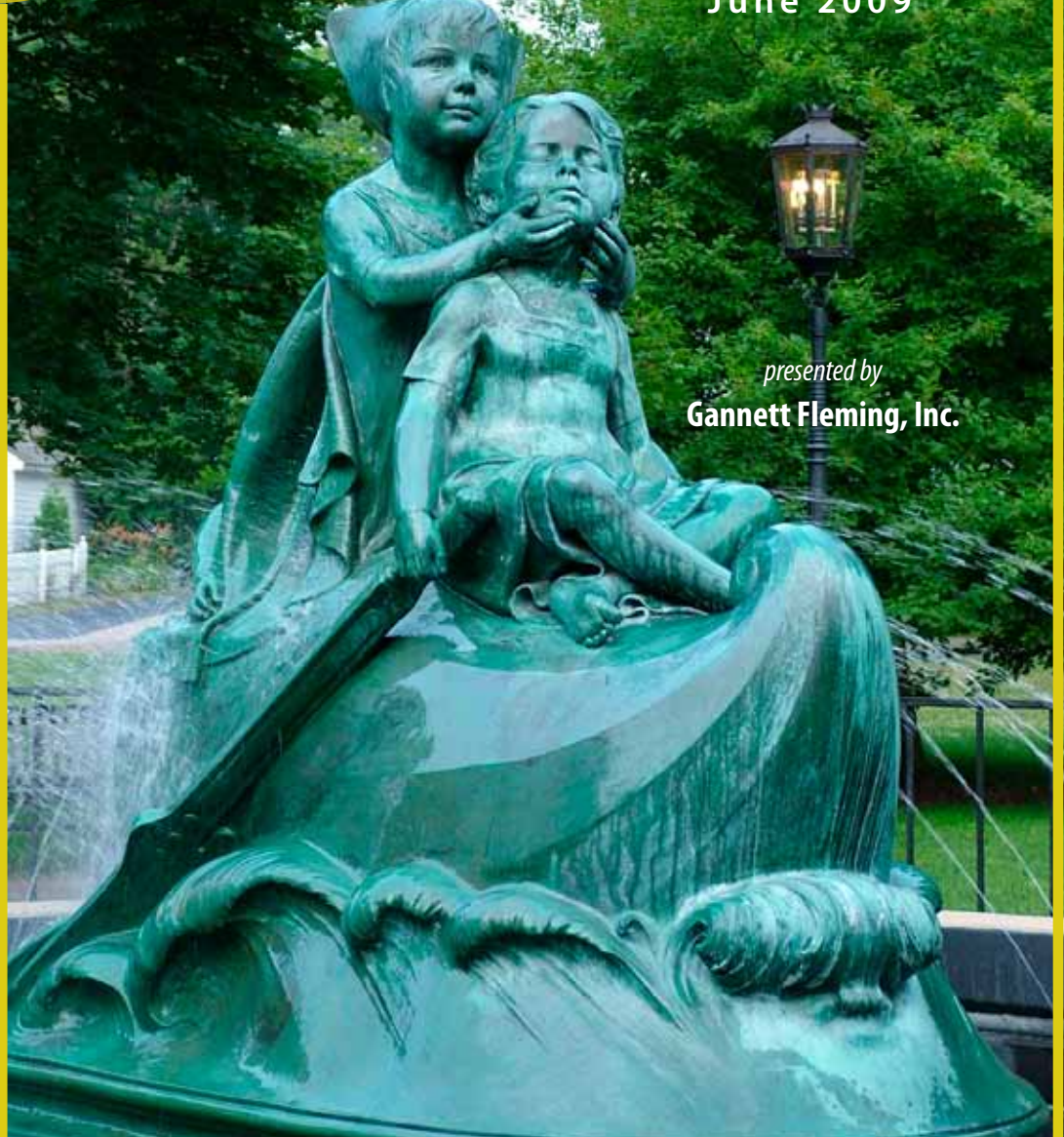
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

June 2009

presented by
Gannett Fleming, Inc.



Wellsboro
Enhancement Strategy
and Mobility Plan



Study Methodology

- Project Advisory Committee
- Data Collection
- Stakeholder Input
- Community Survey
- Public Open Houses
- Development of Draft Recommendations and Outreach
- Final Report/Executive Summary

Why did we conduct this study?

Wellsboro is a significant place in Pennsylvania's Northern Tier region. Our position as a seat of government, business center, major community along scenic Route 6, and soon-to-be terminus of the Pine Creek rail-trail naturally makes us a significant destination for workers and visitors. Our downtown's character, featuring the trademark gaslights, locally-owned businesses and tree-lined streets give Wellsboro a sense of place that few communities possess.

Transportation is an important supporting element of any successful community. This includes everything from how easy it is for a child or senior citizen to cross a busy street, to how well our transportation system connects our residents, businesses, and industries to the outside world. We sought to administer a study that would identify the borough's most pressing transportation concerns and then establish a plan for addressing them. We have learned a lot about Wellsboro through the study process, from what's important to the community and what it believes to be the most vital areas of our transportation system that are in need of attention.

Through the study, we have identified ways in which transportation modes can better interact with one another, ways in which technology can be used to provide improved traveler information and system performance, and ways in which non-motorized modes such as bicycling and walking can be made more convenient and safe. This report represents only the beginning of a continuous process as we work together with interested borough businesses and residents, and other partners such as our county commissioners, the Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission, PennDOT, and other state agencies.

What was studied, and how?

The Project Advisory Committee members provided the overall direction for the study. The study team collected and analyzed data for the study area related to: People (population composition and trends), Transportation (system performance and safety), and Traffic (volumes and turning movement counts). The team also collected anecdotal data with subjective input offered by the Project Advisory Committee, community survey, public open houses, interactive Web survey, and stakeholder groups such as senior citizens and middle school students.

Facts and opinions about the study process are highlighted on the following pages, and presented in the full report.

Facts: Highlights of Study Area Data

Stable Growth: In the 15-year period ending 2005, the borough's population has declined by three percent, while vehicle miles of travel (VMT) have been increasing an average of one-half of one percent annually. Since 1990, Wellsboro has experienced a net decline of 105 persons, while neighboring Delmar Township has declined by 103. Charleston Township, however, has expanded by 319. The growth in Charleston Township is not substantial, but is noteworthy in a county that grew by only 256 persons over the same period. Bottom line, the Greater Wellsboro area is maintaining its population base as other areas of the county are declining.

Aging Population: Nearly 25 percent of borough residents are age 65 or above. This is nearly nine percentage points higher than the state rate of 15.6 percent. Average age of borough residents is 44.2—also higher than the state average of 38. With the community's demographics skewed toward an older population, transportation elements such as signing, sight distance, and appropriate signal timing for pedestrian walk phases must be considered.

Safety Concerns: Universal concern over the intersection of Main, Charleston, and Tioga Streets was expressed through community surveys, focus group meetings, public open houses, and input from the Project Advisory Committee. A signal warrant analysis of the intersection demonstrated that the intersection satisfies three warrants¹ for signalization, based on traffic volume. As a connector between downtown Wellsboro and the extension of the Pine Creek rail-trail, Charleston Street will need to be improved with shoulders and sidewalks. The area's second-highest ranking transportation issue, as identified by the public, was pedestrian safety.

Outdated Traffic Signal Equipment: There are currently four signalized intersections in Wellsboro. Signal permits indicate that the signal at East Avenue and Main Street has not been updated in more than a decade, while the signal on East Avenue and Grant Street has not been updated since 1988. Also, several of the intersections do not have pedestrian signal heads and associated push buttons. Actuation and detection are sorely needed to improve traffic operations. Upgrading to LED indications would also improve safety and efficiency over time.

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¹ A warrant is a condition that an intersection must meet to justify a signal installation.

Substandard Roadway Conditions: The Borough has worked to improve several roadways in recent months, including Bacon Street and McInroy Street. Other local roadways in need of improvement include Bodine, Lincoln, Stickley, and Upper Jackson. The Borough receives approximately \$84,000 annually in liquid fuels funding but does not have a formal Capital Improvement Program (CIP) in place to maintain a prioritized inventory of roadways for improvement. State roadways such as PA 660 will be milled and resurfaced in summer 2009.

Sidewalk Maintenance: The Borough recently used funding from an Elm Street grant to construct sidewalks along East Avenue to the Wellsboro Plaza. Other areas in the borough have discontinuous sidewalks or sidewalks in poor condition. In some places, such as the areas surrounding Charlotte Lappla Elementary School, there are no sidewalks at all. With input from Borough police and community surveys, several areas have been identified as being in need of sidewalk improvement, including: Grant, Hastings, Meade, Nichols, Queen, and Sherman Streets, among others.

Opinions: What's important to residents

The study team mailed a survey to every property owner in the borough in September 2008 to identify study issues. The team received 276 surveys for a return rate of nearly 26 percent, which is very good for this type of survey. Respondents were asked to rate various study issues as "Very Important," "Medium," and "Less Important." The following table highlights the issues most important to borough residents and was used as one basis for developing report recommendations.

Table 1 – Highest Rated Issues...by Percent Reporting "Very Important"

Issue	Percent Saying "Very Important"
1. Improving the intersection of Main/Tioga/ Charleston	81.7
2. Ensuring pedestrian safety	76.5
3. Ensuring safe walking routes to area schools	62.4
4. Improving roadway conditions	62.3
5. Maintaining sidewalks	61.2
6. Maintaining the borough's historic character	59.8
7. Increasing the availability of sidewalks and crosswalks	56.8
8. Better enforcing traffic laws (speeding, etc.)	55.0

Source: Gannett Fleming, Inc.

What were the results of the study?

The study team identified and included 15 study recommendations in the study implementation plan. The recommendations are based on broad-based public participation, including two public open houses, a community survey, stakeholder outreach to senior citizens and middle school students, and an interactive Web survey. As a result of the study process, the Borough has identified a prioritized listing of improvement needs with an associated action plan for implementation. Recommendations cover the following broad subject areas:

- Roadway Conditions
- Operations (signals and signal systems)
- Sight distance
- Ordinance-related issues
- Non-motorized modes

Recommendations are listed below and described in more detail within the report:

- A. Address poor roadway surface conditions
- B. Upgrade the Borough's signal equipment and hardware
- C. Signalize the intersection of Main/Tioga/Charleston
- D. Develop the Marsh Creek Greenway as a link from the Pine Creek Rail-Trail to Wellsboro
- E. Improve Charleston Street as a connector from the Marsh Creek Greenway to downtown Wellsboro
- F. Investigate the need for a signal at Wellsboro Plaza
- G. Evaluate sight distance limitations at various intersections
- H. Develop and adopt an access management ordinance
- I. Improve non-motorized access to recreational areas
- J. Monitor the intersection of Bacon, Morris, and Waln
- K. Improve public transportation services
- L. Initiate a program to upgrade pedestrian routes to ADA standards
- M. Address signing and roadway markings
- N. Plan for vacant properties on East Avenue
- O. Maximize on-street parking capacity

Who led this study?

The Wellsboro Borough Council hired Gannett Fleming, a planning consulting firm based in Camp Hill, and developed a Project Advisory Committee to guide the study process. Members included:

Rick Biery	NTRPDC
Robert Blair	Tioga County Development Corporation
Bob Chesko	Sherwood Motel
Jim Daugherty	Wellsboro Mayor
John Dugan	Wellsboro Borough Council
Joan Hart	Wellsboro Borough Council
Dave Howey	Charleston Township Supervisor
Fred Kennedy	Delmar Township Supervisor
Chris King	PennDOT District 3-0
Gary Mosher	Laurel Health System; WACC Enhancement Committee
Rudy Scharf	Wellsboro Borough Council
Curt Schramm	Country Ski and Sports
Sue Stephens	Wellsboro Borough Secretary
Julie VanNess	Wellsboro Area Chamber of Commerce
Phil Waber	Wellsboro School District Superintendent
Jim Weaver	Tioga County Planning
Bob Williams	Thornapple Design Group
Mary Worthington	Growth Resources of Wellsboro
Tom Young	Wellsboro Police Department

What happens next?

As part of this study report, members of the study Project Advisory Committee have finalized an implementation plan that outlines the framework for continued leadership and organizational cooperation, progress tracking and reporting, advocacy, funding, and communication/public information.

Who paid for it?

The study was funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation and Wellsboro Borough.