

Meeting Summary

Wednesday, October 23, 2019

Broad, Germantown, and Erie Transportation Safety Project

Zion Baptist Church - 3600 N. Broad Street, Philadelphia PA 19140

Meeting Description

On Wednesday, October 23, 2019, the City of Philadelphia invited the public to attend a community meeting to talk about ways to improve traffic safety at the intersection of Broad, Germantown, and Erie.

The City's North District Plan (adopted on January 16, 2018) identified the Broad, Germantown, and Erie intersection as a focus area to reestablish the area as an accessible downtown of North Philadelphia. To advance project ideas in the North District Plan, the City created the Broad, Germantown, and Erie Task Force, which brings community stakeholders together with City officials to discuss and coordinate plans, developments, and initiatives near this important intersection. **The goal of this Transportation Safety Project is to create safe streets that will connect people to the shopping district with intuitive transit and a comfortable pedestrian environment.**

The purpose of the meeting was to present traffic safety issues happening at the intersection and to show the public draft ideas about what improvements could be made. These ideas were presented in order to get feedback from people about what they liked and did not like in order to make refinements to the concept.

- The meeting was held at the Zion Baptist Church (3600 N. Broad Street) and had three evening sessions: 4PM, 5:30, and 7PM. Each session lasted approximately one hour and was attended by approximately 35 people, most of whom live, work, and/or own businesses near the project area.
- Each session started off with a welcome from Michael Carroll, the City's Deputy Managing Director for the Office of Transportation, Infrastructure, and Sustainability (OTIS), followed by a short presentation about the City's Vision Zero initiatives and crash history in the project area from Kelley Yemen, OTIS's Director of Complete Streets. Andrew Simpson, manager for the transportation safety project, then presented about existing conditions in the project area.
- After the presentation, meeting participants joined small group table discussions with members of the Project Team to review the draft ideas for making traffic safety improvements at the intersection. Table facilitators took notes on the feedback from the discussions.

Quick Meeting Summary

The feedback from the participants about the proposed concept was mixed. Each participant had different takeaways about what they liked and disliked. Some participants questioned why transportation was the focus of the City's efforts when public safety is of critical concern.

There were significant concerns voiced from some business owners on Germantown Avenue; several worry that the diversion of the Route 23 bus off the 3600 block of Germantown Avenue would reduce visitation to businesses. However, feedback about the merits of moving the Route 23 bus differed – some participants were happy that it would move faster along Broad Street, while some worried about a longer distance to walk in order to reach the commercial corridor from the proposed Route 23 bus stops.

Improvements to Erie Avenue were generally well received. Bus shelters and other amenities were well liked. Elevators to the subway station were noted as much needed. Some participants associated the project with the pending Beury Building redevelopment projects and that the improvements are not for the people who currently live in the surrounding communities. Many participants asked why the improvements hadn't been done sooner.

Overall, the prevailing theme from meeting participants was fear that the City would build whatever project that the City wanted without considering the wants and needs of the community. The meeting was feared as being "check the box" engagement and that the decision had already been made. The City addressed these concerns by telling the participants that the project still needs significant engineering and feedback from the community would shape the concept.

Other notes about the meeting set up and project process included:

- That the visuals were too technical, and it was difficult to envision the concept.
- That the visuals presented did not show the potential of the plaza at the triangle.
- That the meeting presentation and graphics needs to be made available online.
- That more time is needed to think about the ideas and there needs to be more opportunities to discuss the concept with neighbors.

Overall, participants confirmed that investment in the intersection is needed, and the City should continue to work on the concept and with the community on what those exact improvements could be. While some were skeptical and some did not like all the ideas themselves, there was general agreement that investment by the City would improve the neighborhood.

What's Next

This meeting in October 2019 was the first opportunity for the public to review the draft ideas. The project team is currently planning a follow up community meeting in early 2020 to allow for more feedback to the traffic safety ideas. This feedback will help the Project Team refine the concept.

Detailed Meeting Summary by Topic

Each subheading in this section contains a summary of feedback produced at the October 23, 2019 community meeting regarding each aspect of the project. Below that summary is a bulleted list of common/key information points collected at the meeting. Please note: table scribes did not transcribe every response; this summary is an approximate representation of what participants said.

Trolley Track Removal

Removal of legacy trolley infrastructure, including sections of track along Germantown and Erie Avenues, was very well received. Participants almost entirely supported track removal, seeing a major benefit for pedestrian safety in crosswalks and the ability to better use the width of Erie Avenue if the trolley platform was removed.

- A few said to keep trolley tracks on Germantown
- Most supported trolley track removal
- Like the cobble stones and trolley track removal
- Likes removal of trolley tracks; there is a need to repair damaged streets
- Streetscape Improvements (Lighting, Landscaping, etc.)

Lighting/Landscaping

Improved lighting and landscaping of the intersection were very popular. Lighting was seen as an ability to improve both traffic safety and public safety. People were very keen on bringing green landscape elements to the intersection. Some were interested in wifi-providing kiosks. Many participants drew parallels between lighting and greening improvements to what has been done along Germantown Avenue in Chestnut Hill.

- Increase lighting on Broad Street and surrounding roadways
- Billboards are a distraction to motorists
- Art and greenery is needed to make the area more attractive
- Greening like Germantown in Chestnut Hill is nice – pedestrian light poles with flower baskets and flower baskets along the sidewalks
- Add greenery (i.e. planters, trees and pedestrian light poles) to the corridor similar to Chestnut Hill

Bus Stops/Transit Amenities

Bus shelters and other amenities, including improvements to lighting at transit stops, were well-liked. Elevators to the subway station were noted as much needed. There was interest in real-time transit information (i.e. when the bus and subway would arrive).

- What about doing a bus facility like Olney Transportation Center?
- Confusing to know which entrances to BSL are open; there is nowhere to sit, nowhere to throw your trash. Message it sends is that we don't care about you
- Like: better transit signage
- Need better movement between bus and subway
- There are concerns about the H/XH stop, and how crowded it is and that there is no bus shelter
- Where are the elevators going?
- Why isn't the Erie BSL stop accessible already?
- The H/XH stop really needs bus shelters
- Most people know where they're going already so we don't need more signs for the BSL station. But doesn't SEPTA want to attract new riders too?
- Customer experience
- Bus shelters for the H/XH
- More signage
- SEPTA escalator doesn't always work, people smoke there

- Lighting is poor in and around SEPTA Erie station, feels unsafe
- Triangle only has one bus shelter, needs more
- We need public bathrooms in this area for transit riders
- Supports new bus shelters
- Supports trolley platform removal
- Supports new bus shelters, accented bus lanes, straight through lanes. Supports buses having more room for loading
- Need for elevators – preference for 2 on southwest and northeast corners
- Would like bus shelters at all the bus stops

Erie Avenue

Overall, the ideas for improvements along Erie Avenue was received very favorably. Many participants questioned why these improvements had not been implemented yet. Overall, traffic congestion on Erie Avenue was not a major concern. There was some feedback that narrowing the cartway of Erie Avenue could increase congestion. Some participants wanted to remove the trolley tracks to allow for two travel lanes in each direction in order to reduce perceived congestion. Some participants noted that getting buses out of the travel lane while boarding and alighting passengers would allow traffic to flow better.

- Anything you do on Erie will be an improvement
- Supports accenting the bus loading/ idling zone. Buses currently queue up at loading/idling zone
- Sounds good to me - Better for bus to pull up to curb than median (trolley platform) island
- Should have removed trolley tracks years ago
- Why can't we have a bridge for pedestrians across Broad Street – it would be safe
- Trolley raised area was a way to get around traffic
- Need pedestrian overpasses/bridges rather than at-grade crossings (regardless of costs, accessible issues, etc.)
- Not totally opposed to the proposal, but need more time to think
- What about facilities for people waiting for bus on NW corner of Broad and Erie?
- More lighting requested – not bright enough along Erie Avenue
- More trash cans requested
- Hacks currently gather on the east side of Erie Avenue between Broad Street and Germantown Avenue. Where will they go with widened sidewalk? This is a service the community feels it needs so it needs to be accommodated somehow
- How will this affect the hack cabs that park on the south side of Erie between Broad and Germantown?
- Interesting – I do think something needs to be done to make pedestrians safer. Concerned about the flow of traffic, especially in the morning on Broad. Concerned about dangerous left turns. Same during evening rush hour
- Double parking potential on Erie, east of Broad
- Buses will not pull into bus lanes, they will block traffic
- There is an existing back up on Erie Avenue
- Add bus only lanes
- Like: Alternate flowing lanes
- Wants red light camera at Broad and Erie
- Wants pedestrian scramble
- Attendees mention that Erie Avenue needs two lanes in each direction to accommodate traffic volume
- Traffic on Erie Avenue – we need 2 lanes
- Concern about parking, the meters make it hard, people want to drive to SEPTA and park, those people should



Deputy Managing Director Michael Carroll welcoming the first session.

- have to move by 4 or 5 pm
- Old (former) trolley platforms are dangerous and should be removed
- We need to remove the trolley platforms
- Concerns with how dangerous the illegal left turns are
- Safety concerns about people waiting at and walking to trolley platforms to catch the bus
- People prefer to have a standard bus stop on the side of the road
- Concerns about the effects of the road diet on traffic
- Lots of conversation about whether or not drivers on Erie can actually use two lanes now
- Safety concern about trolley platforms
- Likes high visibility bus lanes and bike lanes
- Supports new bus shelters
- Water drainage issue at Broad and Erie when it rains
- Drainage issues at Old York Road
- Concern about the concept creating congestion on Erie Avenue
- Interest in canopies for riders on Erie Avenue bus island in the future – larger than just a single bus shelter
- Drivers get stuck on Erie between Broad and Germantown
- Support for removing and improving the former trolley island in front of PGW
- Can traffic signal timing be fixed?
- Why not extend trolley track removal to 10th Street or further east?
- Understood the funding constraints but would like the City to look at removing the trolley tracks in the Old York Road intersection.
- Stoplight on Broad Street is too short for pedestrians to cross, especially if people are walking with kids
- Issue with the 56/53 bus stop on the east side of Erie – the bus currently blocks Elder Street and the plans don't show any improvement to that situation

Erie Avenue Bike Lanes

In general, the feedback of adding protected bike lanes on Erie Avenue, east of Broad Street, was generally receptive, with some more positive and some more opposed; however, there was concern as to who would use the bike lanes and why they are needed. Participants reacted positively to sidewalk level bike paths that would not trap trash. There was also a few notes of concern about the safety of people walking across the bike lane.

- Concern about people walking getting hit by bikes when crossing bike lane
- Like the parking protected bike lanes
- What happens to bike lane in the snow?
- Bike lane poses a challenge – more conflicts and congestion
- Conflicts for trash trucks with bikes
- Protected bike lane – generally positive reaction from table
- Adamantly against bike lanes, we don't ride bikes; it's for other folks. Driving culture and not interested in walking or biking around.
- Have some safety concerns related to the speed of bikes
- Walk bikes across the extended median tips.
- Bike lanes could be supported.
- Bike lanes might pose a hazard to pedestrians. i.e. speeding

Broad Street/Germantown Avenue

Meeting participants confirmed traffic along Germantown, when crossing Broad Street, often blocks the flow of traffic along Broad Street, creating congestion and frustration. Participants recognized that a full concrete median down the middle of Broad Street, north of Erie Avenue, could alleviate this issue. However, there was significant concern related to the proposed changes to the Route 23 bus that are required to allow for the Broad Street median and the enlarged public plaza/triangle.

Traffic Circulation Changes

Traffic and vehicle circulation was discussed, but largely about how it relates to the commercial corridor. There was acknowledgment of traffic and congestion is occurring here, and agreement that Germantown Avenue is a major factor, but people saw different benefits in the full median along Broad Street that would limit this diagonal crossing. The first thing people tended to ask regarding traffic and circulation is whether the existing signals could just be changed to give a certain movement (whichever they typically use) more time in the intersection.

- I liked the idea at first, but closing off Germantown, I felt like that can't happen. It's hard to think about how to get through neighborhood without needing to use that block of Germantown
- Feels like you have to go far out of your way if you're driving along Germantown
- Can green lights be longer?
- Can the intersection be more user friendly for someone going northbound on Broad Street to get to Germantown?
- The proposed new signal at Germantown and Broad should not allow a right turn on red
- I don't even like driving on Germantown
- Need more stop signs
- Vehicles currently use Venango to avoid Erie and the intersection
- Germantown traffic gets stuck in intersection because of signal timings
- Today, right turn from northbound Broad onto Erie traffic get stuck between Broad and Germantown
- Today, vehicles queue across the

crosswalks of Germantown Avenue at Erie Avenue, making it difficult for pedestrians to cross

- How are other intersections impacted by diverted traffic?
- Like: A protected left turn phase from southbound Broad to eastbound Butler
- Traffic impacts from west of Broad will continue east of Broad
- Potential for gridlock
- Impacts on traffic on surrounding blocks
- Add red light cameras
- There should be left turns allowed from southbound Broad to eastbound Erie.
- There were worries that closing a leg of Germantown Avenue would cause traffic to shift to the residential side streets
- Congestion makes crossing hard as is
- Will there be more traffic on side streets because Germantown is closed?
- What about trucks?
- Why would you cut off a major road?
- There is illegal jaywalking across Broad – this idea should make it much safer
- There is more traffic coming due to the Beury Building – this plan won't accommodate that.
- Can we get a traffic circle here, with a pedestrian overpass for transit access?
- People like the proposed new signal of Germantown Avenue (southbound) and Broad Street with the extended median along Broad Street and curb extensions at Fish Park on Germantown Avenue
- Against closing off Germantown Avenue. Drivers prefer the full access to and from Germantown Avenue
- Believes proposed improvements will increase travel time for vehicular traffic including emergency vehicles
- Request for change in the timing of signalization
- Concern about the ability for emergency vehicles to move through traffic (around buses and concrete medians)
- How do cars go southbound on Germantown?
- Question about how other diagonal streets are handled, especially as they cross Broad Street. Ridge Avenue and Broad Street was brought up.
- Allow for two-way traffic on north segment of Germantown to allow passing drivers to access businesses
- Add pedestrians scrambles (all pedestrian phases) to some of the signals
- It's tight on Germantown, lots of mirrors and damage to vehicles from buses and large vehicles as they pass each other
- Concerns about moving the southbound 23 bus stop across Broad Street to the southwest corner of Broad and Erie
- Broad Street is seen as a barrier to the commercial corridor

Broad/Erie/Germantown Public Plaza (Triangle)

Overall, meeting participants had a hard time envisioning the public plaza and how it can be an enhancement to the intersection. Most recognized how it can provide space for the needed transit amenities; however, some were concerned that the space would invite more loitering and public safety issues. Meeting participants wanted to hear more about the potential benefits the plaza could provide.

- The finished product looks like it would be great
- I had a friend who was killed waiting for the bus at the bus shelter on the triangle by a car that lost control – how will you make sure people on the plaza are safe from cars? Would bollards work? I would like to see that
- More greenery at the triangle would be nice; would make it attractive
- Would love to see improvements like this, it has to be good design, better than how it looks now
- If that part of Germantown (between Erie Avenue and Broad Street) isn't closed, I don't think people will use the triangle
- Why can't you just work with the existing triangle and not close the block of Germantown?
- Triangle is an interesting concept, but what will be done with it / what are the plans for it?
- It sounds nice to say there would be a seating area, but it would be filthy with litter
- I would like the plaza
- The improvement would bring in resources. The City would pay more attention
- I want PennDOT to help pay for maintenance
- Who will maintain the new triangle? There is a likelihood to become an eyesore, who will pick up trash/clean, will it become a hangout (already homeless and drug users in the area)?
- Triangle is okay, but could it be smaller to allow at least northbound Germantown Avenue to get to Broad Street and have at least one direction of traffic and Route 23 remain through the business district?
- I like this idea
- Can the bus just go north on Germantown between Erie and Broad, but the road be closed to cars? Keep median on Broad Street so bus still going north on Broad from there? - Could give up northbound or southbound bus, but not both on Germantown.
- Likes the plaza
- Likes greening
- Also worried that trucks in particular would divert to small side streets, which could be unsafe
- We should lose Germantown Avenue by Fish Park and make it a pedestrian walk, while keeping the other part of Germantown (by Dunkin Donuts) open to traffic.
- Closing the triangle would create bad traffic and be inconvenient
- Shrink the size of proposed public space (triangle) and create bus only lane that goes through triangle
- What would happen in the public space if it was built?
- What is the public space for?
- Plaza could be an asset if it's useful to the community
- Interest in a market for vendors or other activations at the proposed plaza
- Should leave one lane northbound to connect to Broad Street on Germantown and create a transit island

Route 23 Changes

Feedback on changes to the Route 23 was varied. Some participants were very concerned that moving the bus to Broad Street through the intersection would make it difficult for seniors and riders with limited mobility to catch the bus; others were concerned that the change would negatively impact businesses on Germantown Avenue. Some participants; however, were happy that the bus might move faster on Broad Street and would be less prone to being stuck on Germantown Avenue. There was some concern about the streets the bus would use to get back to Broad Street – namely potential congestion on Ontario Street and the width of Venango Street. There was little concern about using Pike Street.

- Concern about congestion on Ontario due to hospital traffic
- Route 16 bus causes delay at Venango
- Concerns on the Route 23 two-way operation on Ontario Street and conflicts with hospital traffic (both on-foot and in-vehicle)
- Buses turning from Broad Street onto Ontario Street will block Broad Street traffic
- Bus turns on Venango Street will be inhibited by narrowness of cartway
- The block of Ontario east of Broad is narrow
- Concern about left turn off Broad onto Ontario
- Concern about Ontario east of Broad being backed up and bus blocking Broad when turning left
- Prefer the bus routes (north and south) matching. Less confusing
- Venango seems too narrow for bus
- Buses get backed up on Germantown northbound before Venango
- Bus misses 2 blocks of Germantown Avenue
- Likes the northbound bus route with a left at Pike
- Removing the 23 from Germantown is a change of history
- Worried about the Route 23 stop being removed from blocks of Germantown
- Very happy with the 23 conceptual rerouting
- Bus routing changes are inconvenient for the elderly
- Prefers 23 bus to stay on Germantown Avenue
- Left turn onto Ontario will be hard for the bus
- Turning left on Ontario is dangerous as Ontario is a narrow street and there is the hospital access
- The northbound bus should turn back to Germantown above Pike because Pike is narrow
- Removing buses from Germantown Avenue could make it better since there will be less vehicle damage
- Concerns about increased traffic and safety issues on Venango and Ontario if traffic is diverted on to those blocks

Overall Takeaways

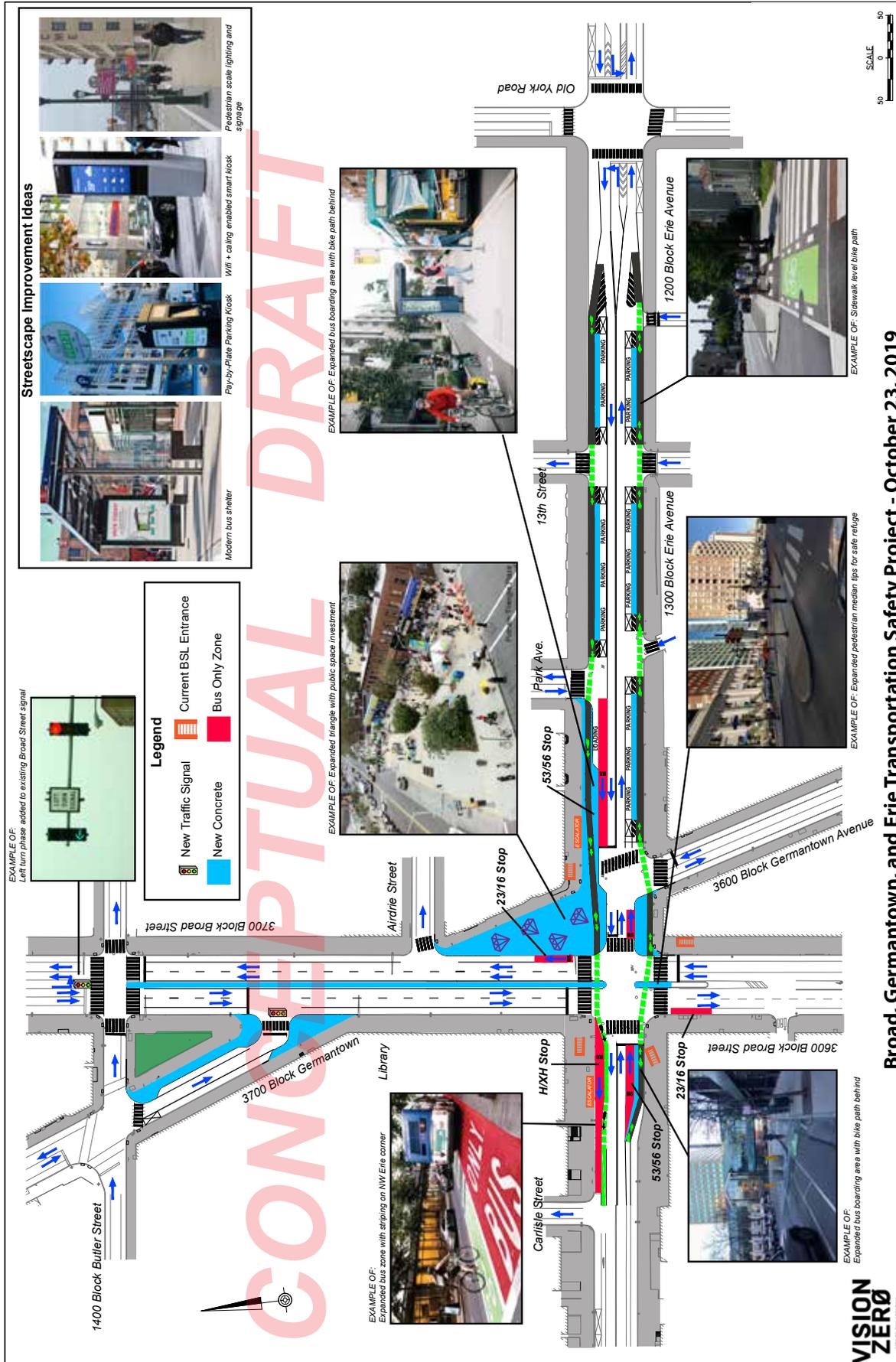
Participants were given the opportunity to share their overall takeaway from the discussions at many of the tables. Overall, people were interested in many aspects of the concept after having a chance to talk through all of the potential changes and ask questions about the ideas. The prevailing sentiment was that the ideas shown at the meeting were a starting point, but that more work was needed.

- Like the concept
- Going to have to compromise
- Not with it yet
- Kind of like what's going on
- Have to compromise no matter what
- Not 100% with it
- Lukewarm, not set on it, everything changes – biggest concern is the seniors
- I'm 95% on board
- I didn't like changes at 30th Street and now I love it
- 50/50
- General support for the concept
- Believes proposed improvements are too drastic
- A different mindset about the intersection
- Interested in the idea

What's Next

This meeting in October 2019 was the first opportunity for the public to review the draft ideas. The project team is currently planning a follow up community meeting in early 2020 to allow for more feedback to the traffic safety ideas. This feedback will help the Project Team refine the concept.

For more information, please visit phila.gov/otis.



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