Philadelphia2050 Planning Together

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation infrastructure shapes Philadelphia's economy, environment, social equity, and overall quality of life. The city's multimodal network, including roads, sidewalks, bike lanes, airports, and transit connects residents to jobs, services, education, and recreational opportunities. Yet access, reliability, and safety vary across neighborhoods. And aging infrastructure and changing travel patterns present ongoing challenges. Through planning, Philadelphia can strengthen its transportation system by expanding safe, accessible options, improving connectivity across all modes, and ensuring that every community benefits from future investments.

TRANSPORTATION IN PHILADELPHIA

- **Philadelphia has a robust transportation network** anchored by SEPTA's extensive multimodal system (buses, trolleys, subways, regional and light rail) that serves 198 million riders annually. It is also supplemented by one of the largest urban bike and pedestrian networks in the U.S. with 360.2 miles of bike lanes, 166 miles of trails, and 2,482 miles of sidewalk.[1, 2, 3, 4]
- **Traffic deaths remain high.** Pre-2020, Philadelphia averaged about 90 traffic-related deaths per year. In 2020, that number jumped to 155, and the city's fatality rate has remained higher than that of comparable peer cities.[5]
- **Changing commuting habits.** From 2010 to 2024, the percentage of commuters who took public transit dropped from 27% to 20%. During that same time, the percentage of commuters who drove alone to work also declined from 50% to 45%. This shift can be attributed to remote work options with 16% of the workforce working remotely, and an increase in walking and biking commuters.[6, 7, 8]
- **Transit ridership recovery post-pandemic.** In 2020, pre-pandemic ridership was at 223 million riders annually, which saw a 92% drop during the peak of the pandemic. However, post-pandemic ridership numbers show an uptick to 198 million riders per year. This indicates a rebound on par with national ridership recovery, which is at 79% of pre-pandemic ridership.[9, 10, 11]
- **Workforce commuting patterns:** Residents rely on a range of transportation options to access jobs across the city and region, making reliable and efficient commuting critical to economic opportunity. In Philadelphia, the average commute is 27 minutes with 45% of workers driving and 20% taking public transit.[12]

SEPTA's New Wissahickon Transit Center (2025)



TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGES

- **SEPTA funding:** SEPTA faces long-term funding challenges that threaten the sustainability of the region's public transit system. Stable, predictable funding is critical to maintaining and modernizing service, supporting workforce access, and ensuring that Philadelphia's multimodal network can continue to meet the needs of a growing and changing population.
- **Transit improvements can support outer neighborhoods:** While Philadelphia has a strong public transit system, many residents still lack efficient and reliable options. Large portions of Northeast Philadelphia and some sections of Southwest and Northwest Philadelphia are served by infrequent routes, limiting access to the region's major job centers in Center City and University City and suburban hubs like King of Prussia and Conshohocken. Residents in these areas often face longer commutes, indirect transit routes, or a reliance on cars to reach employment opportunities, highlighting persistent inequities in regional connectivity.
- **Protecting pedestrians, cyclists, and people with disabilities:** Pedestrians, cyclists, and people living with disabilities often face dangerous conditions due to the design of city streets. Philadelphia has the highest disability rate (16.9%) among large U.S. cities, making this issue particularly important to address.

CITY INITIATIVES

Philadelphia has several initiatives aimed at improving its multimodal transportation system. Complete Street Standards guide street design to safely and efficiently accommodate all users, incorporating features such as protected bike lanes, widened sidewalks, and dedicated bus lanes. Vision Zero focuses on eliminating traffic fatalities and serious injuries, prioritizing safety for pedestrians and cyclists. The Philadelphia Transit Plan outlines strategies to create a more modern, reliable, and equitable transit network. Complementing these efforts, the Philadelphia Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan guides expansion of the city's walking and biking networks, updates design standards, and identifies the high-injury network to prioritize safety improvements. Similarly, the Philadelphia Trails Plan inventories existing trails and guides the creation of new ones. Since its adoption, approximately 75 miles of trails have been added or rehabilitated. Together, these initiatives aim to address gaps in accessibility, safety, and service quality across the city's transportation system.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Thoughtful planning and collaboration will be necessary to address Philadelphia's transportation needs. Through continued analysis and public engagement, Philadelphia2050 will address key priorities for strengthening transportation access and mobility, including:

- How Philadelphia can invest and support projects that make it possible for multimodal transit to thrive in the city.
- How Philadelphia can improve the accessibility and affordability of its transportation system while navigating the constraints of inadequate and unpredictable funding.
- How Philadelphia can improve safety for vulnerable road users.
- How Philadelphia can use zoning and land use tools to promote alternative modes of transportation.
- How Philadelphia can use zoning reforms, public land strategies, and infrastructure investments to support denser, walkable, Transit Oriented Communities.
- How Philadelphia can address planning challenges, such as revised parking minimums, to ensure more equitable access to city resources.

Endnotes

1 *Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA). June & Fiscal YearEnd 2024 Revenue & Ridership Report, 12. 2024.*
2 *New and Repaved Bike Lanes | Philly Stat 360 Hub*
3 *City of Philadelphia – Parks & Recreation. Parks & Rec trail projects. 2025.*
4 *City of Philadelphia. Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan. 2012 (p. 56)*
5 *City of Philadelphia – Vision Zero. Vision Zero Annual Report 2024. December 2024.*
6 *Comparison between 2010 and 2024 1-year ACS data*
7 *U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey 2024 1-Year Estimates, Subject Table S0801: Commuting Characteristics. data.census.gov. 2025.*
8 *Philadelphia City Planning Commission (PCPC). Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan Progress Report 2021 (p. 7). 2023.*
9 *Economy League of Greater Philadelphia. Greater Philadelphia's Public Transportation System and COVID-19 – Part 3. N.d.*
10 *Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA). June & Fiscal YearEnd 2024 Revenue & Ridership Report (p.12). 2024.*
11 *American Public Transportation Association (APTA). Public Transportation Ridership Update: APTA Policy Brief, May 2025. 2025.*
12 *U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey 2024 1-Year Estimates, Subject Table S0801: Commuting Characteristics. data.census.gov. 2025.*

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