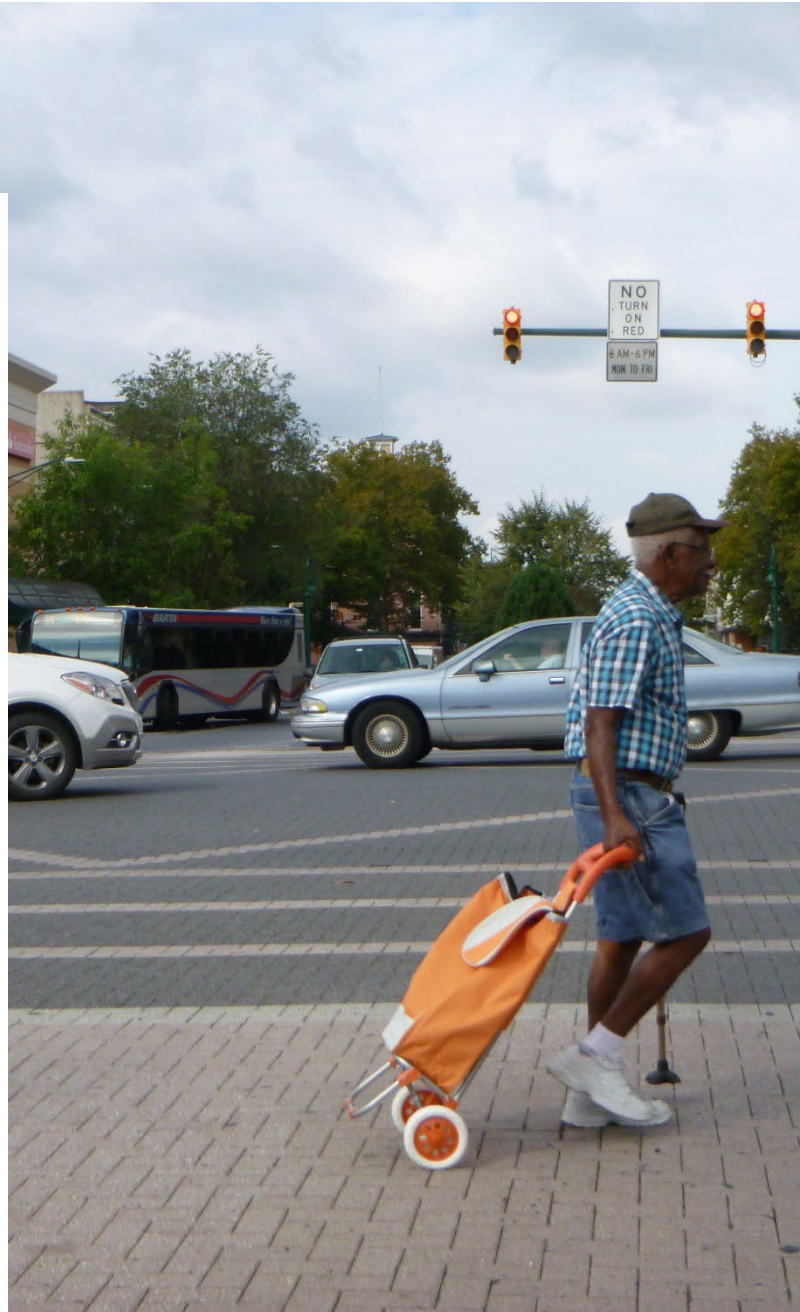


Berks County Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan 2020



ADOPTED JULY 2020
AMENDED MARCH 2022
Reading Area Transportation Study



**Berks County
Planning Commission**

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READING AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY
C/O BERKS COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

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INTRODUCTION

The Berks Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan serves as the non-motorized component of the Reading Area Transportation Study's Long Range Transportation Plan and, by default, the Berks County Comprehensive Plan. In those roles, it is the blueprint for transforming Berks County into a region that supports and encourages

walking and bicycling. Through the recommendations made in the Plan, walking and bicycling are promoted not just for recreation, but as viable means of transporting members of our community who either may not have access to their own vehicles or who may make conscious decisions not to drive.

Berks County is incredibly diverse! It has a great mix of urban landscapes and rural villages, new development and historical areas, public transit and country roads, active recreation and laid-back trails. These features help make it a very desirable place to live and work. Unfortunately, many of those same features create challenges to safely and efficiently moving about without a motor vehicle. In response to these challenges, this Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan hopes to define where improvements need to be made and what kind of improvements should be made.

MAJOR PLAN INFLUENCES

The creation of this Plan is being driven by a number of factors. Chief among them:

- The current Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan was adopted in 2010. Attitudes about biking and walking have changed, with a greater emphasis placed on them for transportation purposes;
- The current Plan is mostly a 'policy-based' plan. There were very few actual projects proposed in it. As such, very little infrastructure has been added to the system;
- Transportation choices are playing an increasing role in public health and environmental sustainability;
- PennDOT has recently implemented their 'PennDOT Connects' process. The Department recognizes that municipal and county governments may have some low-cost infrastructure needs or desires that could be incorporated into roadway projects. Through PennDOT Connects, those projects could be added; but they **MUST** be documented in local and/or regional planning documents;
- As we are updating our Plan, so too PennDOT is currently writing their new Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan;
- Localities can no longer "Build their way" out of congestion with new or expanded roadways. Alternative means of taking shorter trips including biking, walking, and/or public transit, must be promoted; and
- Recent surveys taken by state and local officials have shown a desire by residents to have sidewalks that connect, bicycle routes that are safe, trails that can be used for commuting, and ways to link work, shopping, dining, recreation and everyday life in ways that are enjoyable and inviting.



VISION AND GOALS

VISION STATEMENT

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, composed of community members representing trails, conservation, recreation, county & local government, public health, the disabled community, non-motorized

commuters, and biking & walking advocates, felt very strongly about the Vision for Walking and Biking in Berks County:

“Healthy, vibrant and economically strong communities encourage and value transportation connectivity. Berks County will be a place where people of all ages and abilities can safely, comfortably and conveniently walk or bicycle everywhere.”

By incorporating this Vision into our efforts, we hope to better connect people and communities with opportunities for growth and development while retaining the character of Berks County that makes it so desirable to live and conduct business here.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal #1: Protect and maintain the current bicycle and pedestrian network with efforts to prevent degradation or loss of infrastructure.

Objectives

- 1: Ensure that the current trail system does not fall into a state of disrepair;
- 2: Ensure municipalities are enforcing sidewalk maintenance ordinances, and promote the implementation of sidewalk repair and improvement programs;
- 3: Work with municipalities and non-profit agencies to ensure active maintenance of their off-road networks;
- 4: Use the PennDOT Connects process to ensure that existing sidewalk and bicycle infrastructure is maintained and, where possible, improved;
- 5: Work with PennDOT and municipal roadmasters to ensure timely maintenance of painted roadway markings, including bicycle lanes / sharrows, crosswalks, shoulders, and accompanying signage.

Goal #2: Connect communities in ways that support walking and bicycling as viable transportation options.

Objectives

- 1: Complete gaps in the pedestrian and bicycle networks and expand both to link residential areas with schools, recreation, shopping, and employment;

VISION AND GOALS



- 2: Provide safe and convenient access to/from transit stops;
- 3: Support and promote biking and walking as legitimate travel modes;
- 4: Integrate cycling and walking networks with other transportation systems including transit and multi-use **trails**.

Goal #3: Expand walking and bicycling opportunities for everyone.

Objectives

- 1: Design bicycle infrastructure to accommodate different skill levels and abilities;
- 2: Work with local governments, where appropriate, to ensure their ADA Transition Plans are updated and implemented;
- 3: Improve sidewalk and bicycle access in underserved communities, particularly where it interfaces with transit;
- 4: Coordinate with trail agencies to promote connections that expand access to all;
- 5: Explore opportunities for bike-share stations.

Goal #4: Create and maintain safe bicycling and walking infrastructure.

Objectives

- 1: Reduce pedestrian- and bicycle-related injuries and fatalities;
- 2: Work with municipalities to ensure their sidewalk network is well-maintained and expanded where necessary;
- 3: Work with trail agencies to ensure trails and access is safe and secure
- 4: Target intersections with high pedestrian-crash histories for appropriate safety improvements

Goal #5: Support and promote education and enforcement efforts that increase safety for all users.

Objectives

- 1: Increase acknowledgement and acceptance by motorists that bicycles may legally use roadways;

VISION AND GOALS



- 2: Work with schools and recreation boards to promote safe walking and cycling education;
- 3: Include local law enforcement in walking and bicycling education campaigns;
- 4: Educate drivers and cyclists of their rights and responsibilities.

Goal #6: Promote non-motorized options as environmentally sustainable and healthy ways to travel.

Objectives

- 1: Promote increased use of biking and walking for personal and community health and fitness;
- 2: Increase biking and walking for both work commutes and non-commuting trips
- 3: Work with employers to provide accommodations for employees who choose to walk or bike to work

Goal #7: Support walking and bicycling options as ways to grow a vibrant local economy.

Objectives

- 1: Promote the benefits of bicycle tourism and spending to local businesses;
- 2: Improve walking and cycling access to economic activity hubs;
- 3: Improve walking and cycling access and infrastructure within economic activity hubs.



CURRENT STATE

Understanding where we are demographically, socially and physically will help to guide us into the future. As these factors change over time, opportunities will arise to create networks of walking and cycling routes that are safer and more inviting to all.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Before the process of Plan compilation begins, we have to define our audience. Though initially we think ‘pedestrians and cyclists’, we know that such a broad definition needs to be further refined and defined by the various users of the non-motorized transportation networks. Some of those particular groups include:

School age Children

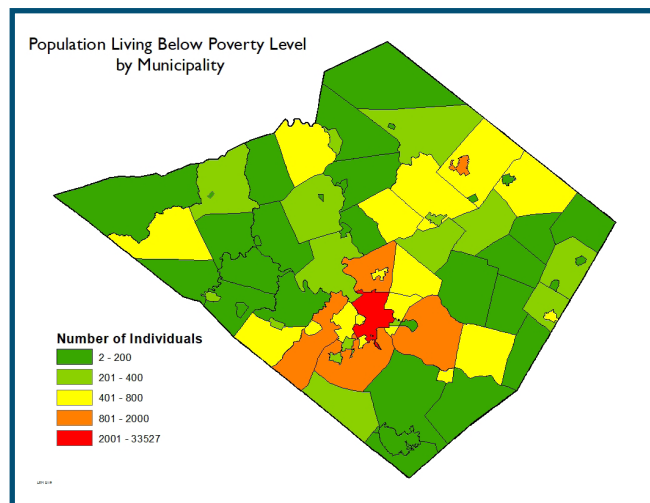
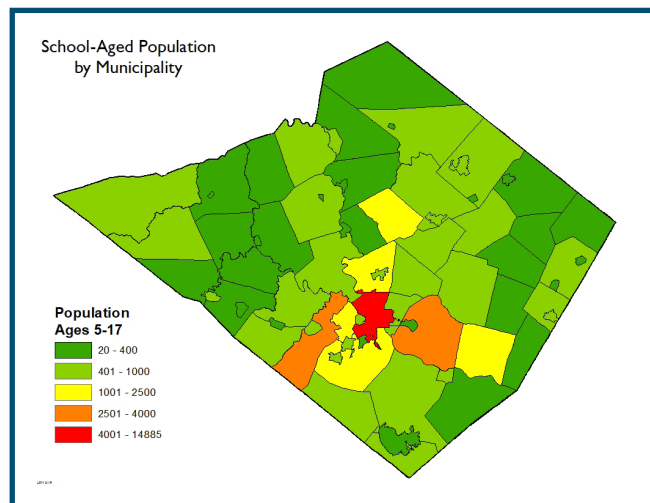
According to the 2016 American Community Survey, there were approximately 57,000 children aged 5-17 in Berks County, many of whom live within walking/biking distance to their school.

College Students

Local college and university campuses have a mixture of on-campus and off-campus residences and commuter students. Student and staff pedestrians and cyclists face challenges navigating between off-campus housing and parking and on-campus activities. In addition, campuses like Albright College have collector streets (N. 13th Street) cutting directly through campus providing a barrier to access between areas of campus.

Low Income Residents

According to the 2016 American Community Survey, there are over 57,000 residents of Berks County living below the poverty level of 12.7 percent. Many of these residents are concentrated in the City of Reading and surrounding municipalities, while poverty is felt throughout the County. Poverty is one factor that limits access to transportation choices, particularly as vehicle ownership becomes increasingly expensive.



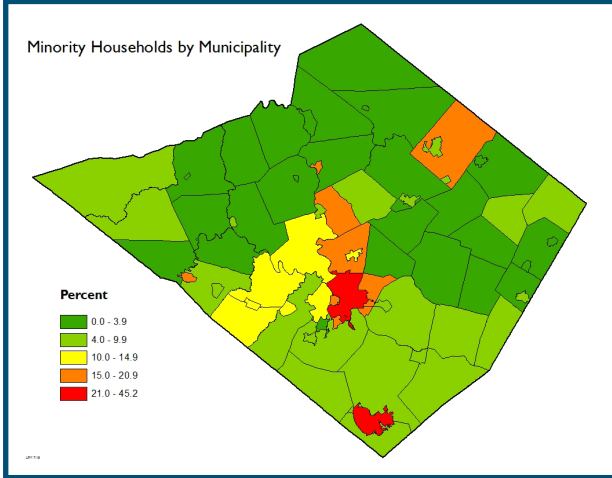
CURRENT STATE



Minority Residents

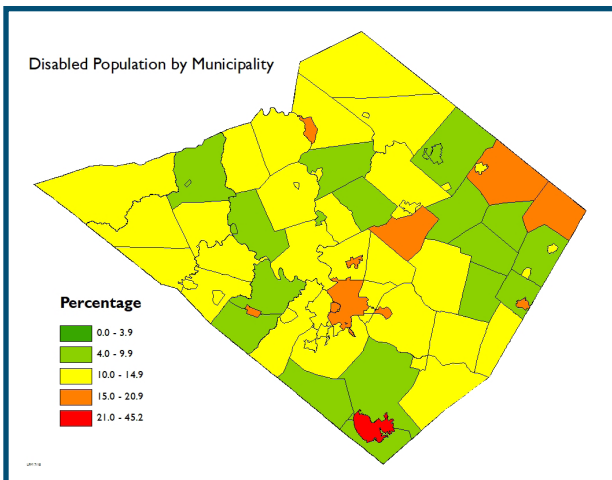
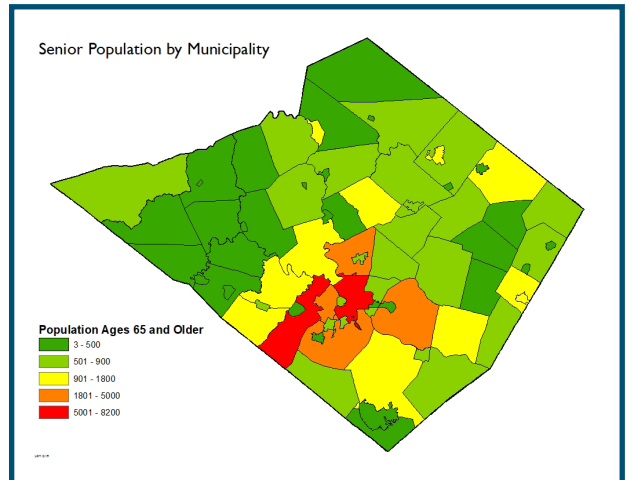
According to the 2016 American Community Survey

there are approximately 71,260 residents of Berks County who are a non-white minority. Additionally, Berks County's Latino population continues to grow with over 83,000 residents claiming Hispanic heritage. Again, while many of these residents are concentrated in the City of Reading and surrounding municipalities there is increasing diversity throughout Berks County.



Elderly

According to the 2016 American Community Survey, there were over 65,000 elderly persons aged 65+ in Berks County. As the population ages, physical infirmities make walking, seeing, hearing and navigating increasingly difficult for more and more persons.



Persons with Disabilities

The 2016 American Community Survey lists almost 50,000 persons who classified themselves as having some type of disability out of a population of approximately 326,000 ages 16 and over. Those disabilities can be described as either sensory (vision, hearing), physical (mobility), mental or self-care. Many of these persons have difficulty using the pedestrian network but may rely heavily on it to obtain access to local shopping, medical appointments, government services, access to transit, and recreation.



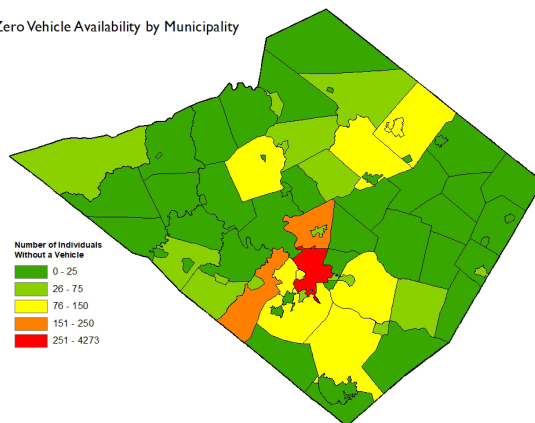
CURRENT STATE

Non-motorized commuters

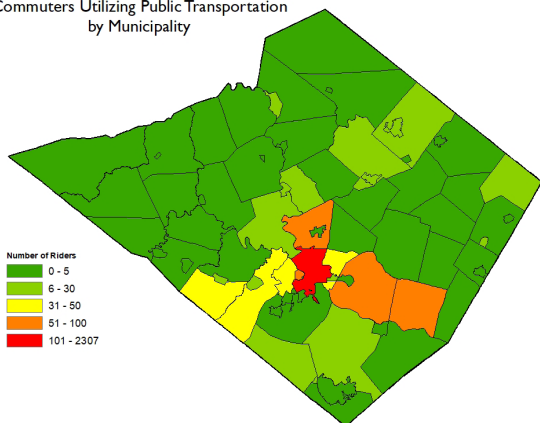
The 2016 American Community

Survey lists 5,385 walking commuters and 2,865 commuters who responded as commuting via alternative methods (including bicycles, motorcycles and taxicabs) in Berks County (out of a total of 194,981 workers). There are approximately 6,500 individuals who do not own a vehicle in Berks County.

Zero Vehicle Availability by Municipality



Commuters Utilizing Public Transportation by Municipality



Transit Users

In 2018, BARTA provided services to over 3.1 million total passengers in 33 municipalities with a service area of over 200,000 persons. With the exception of those using Park-N-Ride lots, most passengers had to walk in order to access their bus. The 2016 American Community Survey lists approximately 3,000 persons in Berks County that utilize public transportation for their daily work commute.

CRASH DATA

Crash data was obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation for 2013 – 2017 through the use of their online Pennsylvania Crash Information Tool (PCIT). The data provided only includes 'Reportable Crashes', as defined by Pennsylvania Title 75 (the Vehicle Code). Reportable crashes include events where there was an injury or death of any person or damage to any vehicle involved to the extent that it cannot be driven under its own power in a customary manner without further damage or hazard to the vehicle, other traffic elements, or the roadway, and therefore requires towing. It should be noted that in Pennsylvania a bicycle is considered a vehicle for legal and reporting purposes. Data for off-street paths is not included in the information presented.

CURRENT STATE

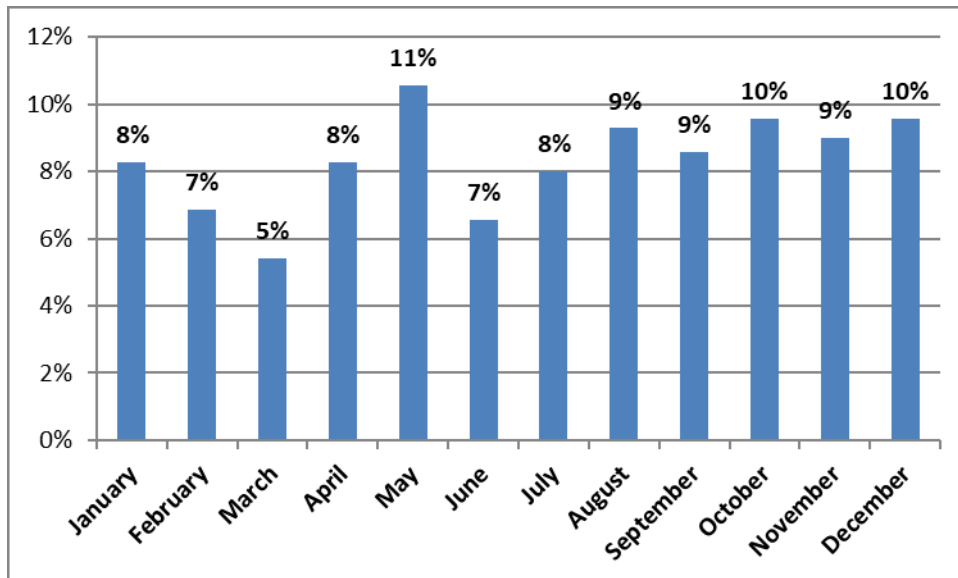


Pedestrian Crashes

There were 700 total reportable crashes during the reported 5-year period that involved pedestrians. Of those, 679 crashes (97%) involved injuries and 21 crashes (3%) resulted in pedestrian deaths. The number of reported crashes per year ranges from 118 to 150, with the highest number of crashes occurring in 2017.

YEAR	NUMBER OF CRASHES
2013	138
2014	118
2015	147
2016	147
2017	150

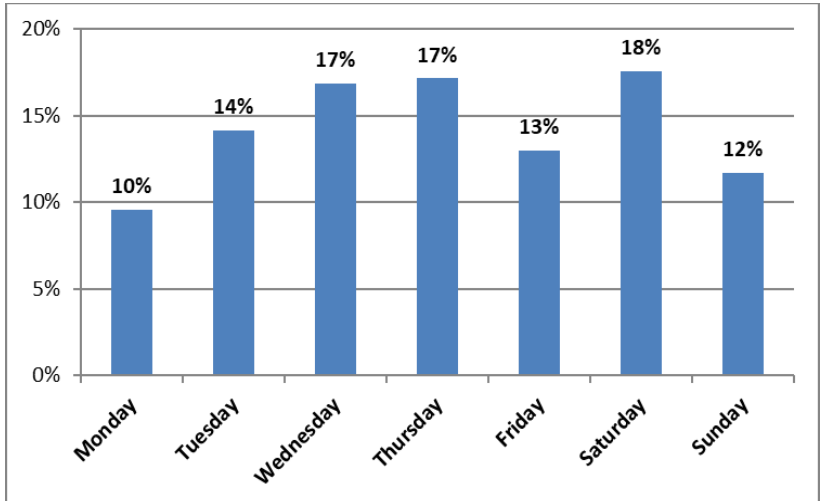
A review of the data also shows that the majority of pedestrian-involved crashes occurred during May (11%), with October and December being the next highest months (10% each). March had the lowest occurrence of pedestrian-related crashes, with only 5%. Total monthly distribution can be seen in below.



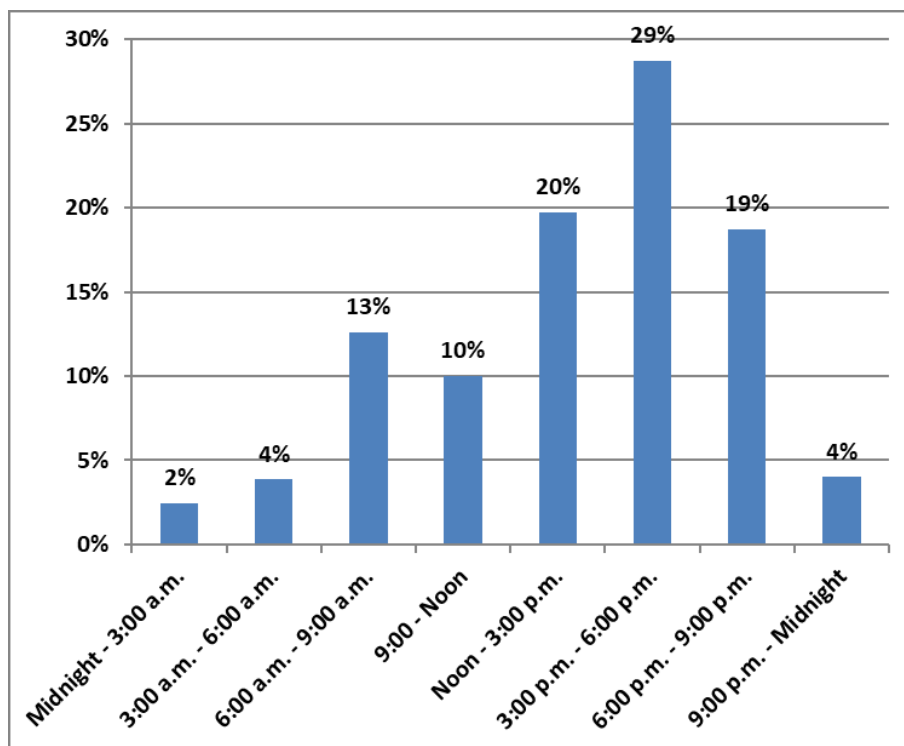
Crashes were relatively evenly distributed during the week, with Saturday having the highest number (18%), followed by Wednesday and Thursday (17% each). Monday had the lowest occurrence, coming in at 10%. Total daily distribution can be seen in the chart on the next page.

CURRENT STATE

The majority of pedestrian crashes occur during afternoon peak travel times.



The majority of crashes (68%) occurred during the afternoon and evening (Noon – 9:00 p.m.), with the hours of 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. containing the highest percentage (29%). The daily distribution can be seen below.



CURRENT STATE



Not surprisingly, the majority of pedestrian-involved crashes occurred in areas where pedestrians are concentrated. The top-5 municipalities (and the number of crashes) include:

- Reading City (433)
- West Reading Borough (38)
- Muhlenberg Township (27)
- Exeter Township (19)
- Wyomissing Borough (19)

Other factors that played a role in pedestrian-related crashes include:

- Location:
 - Intersection: 46% / Non-Intersection: 54%
- Low illumination: 30%
- Distractions: 10%
- Alcohol: 6%
- Red-Light / Stop Sign Running: 1%

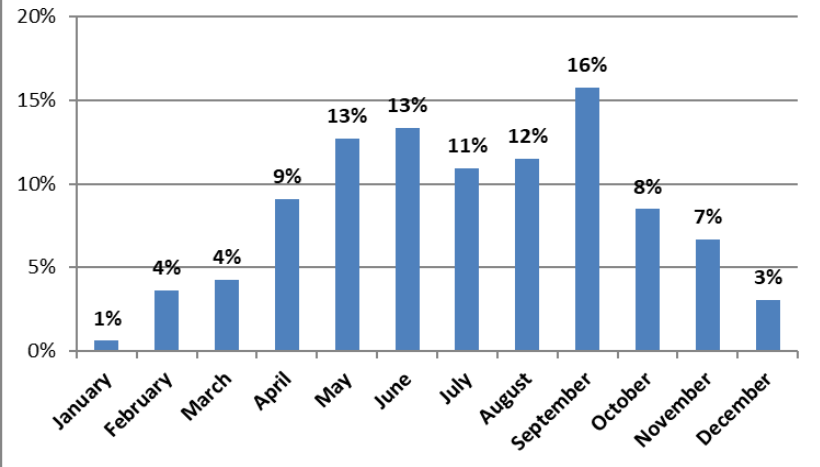
Bicycle Crashes

There were 165 total reportable crashes during the reported 5-year period that involved bicycles. Of those, 164 crashes (99%) involved injuries and 2 crashes (1%) resulted in cyclist deaths. The number of reported crashes per year ranges from 28 to 37, with the highest number of crashes occurring in 2016.

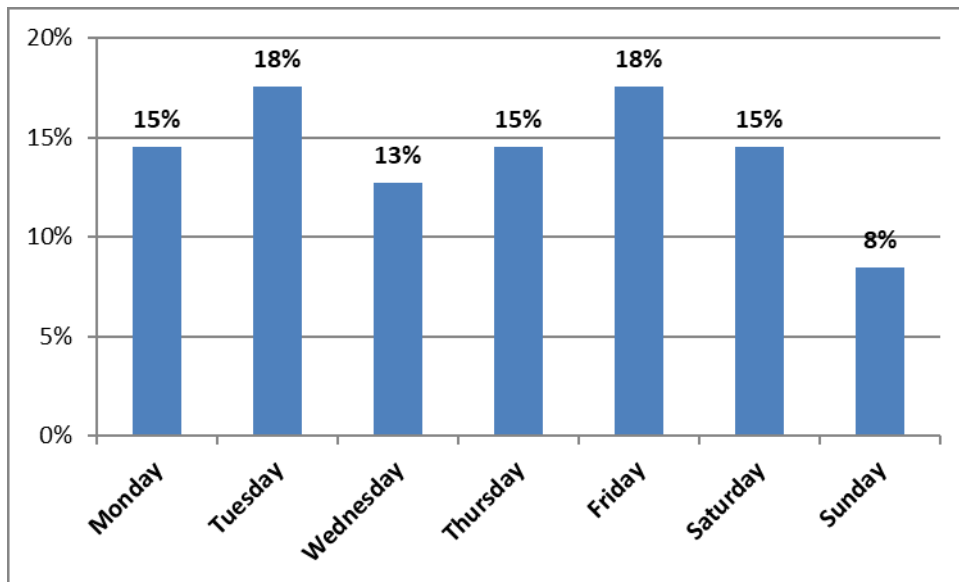
YEAR	NUMBER OF CRASHES
2013	32
2014	28
2015	36
2016	37
2017	32

A review of the data also shows that the majority of pedestrian-involved crashes occurred during September (16%), with May and June being the next highest months (13% each). January had the lowest occurrence of bicycle-related crashes, with only 1%. Total monthly distribution can be seen on the next page.

CURRENT STATE



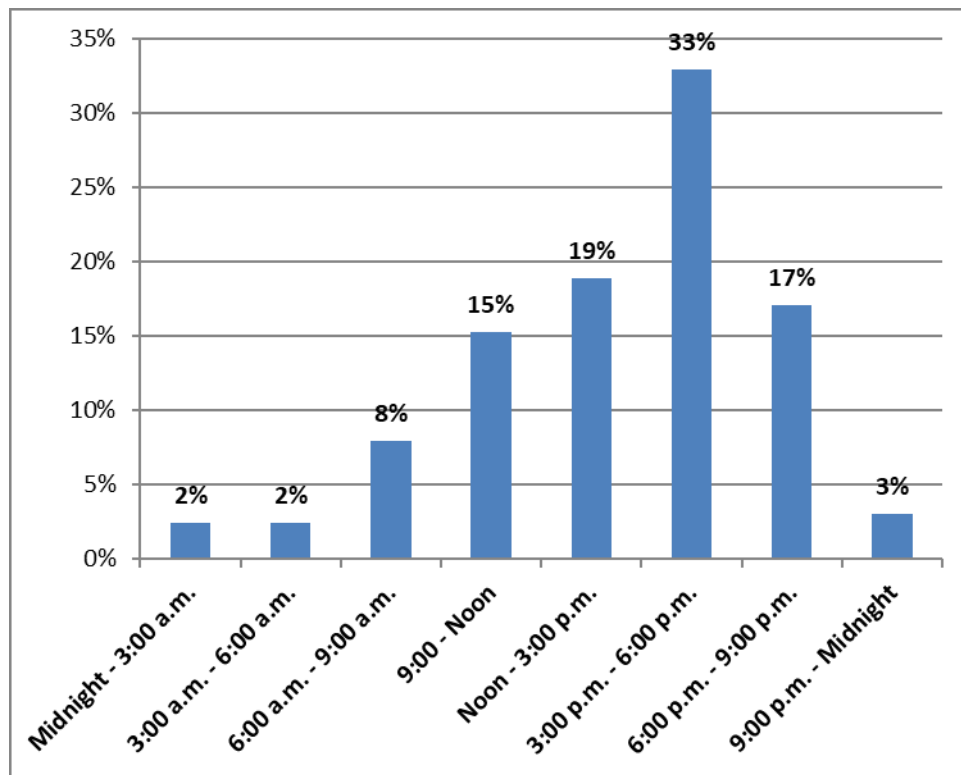
Crashes were evenly distributed during the week, with Tuesday and Saturday having the highest number (18%), followed by Monday, Thursday and Saturday (15% each). Sunday had the lowest occurrence, coming in at 8%. Total daily distribution can be seen below.



CURRENT STATE

The vast majority of bicycle-involved crashes occurred in urban areas.

Similar to pedestrian crashes, the majority of bicycle-related crashes (69%) occurred during the afternoon and evening (Noon – 9:00 p.m.), with the hours of 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. containing the highest percentage (33%). The daily distribution is shown below.



Similar to pedestrian-involved crashes, the vast majority of bicycle-involved crashes occurred in the urban area where cyclists are concentrated. The top-5 municipalities (and the number of crashes) include:

- Reading City (89)
- West Reading Borough (10)
- Spring Township (6)
- Wyomissing Borough (6)
- Muhlenberg Township (5)



CURRENT STATE

Other factors that played a role in bicycle-related crashes include:

- Location:
 - Intersection: 71% / Non-Intersection: 29%
- Low illumination: 18%
- Distractions: 11%
- Alcohol: 4%
- Red-Light / Stop Sign Running: 1%

Additionally, the type of bicycle crash can be analyzed as follows:

- Head-on or Opposite Direction Sideswipe: 8%
- Angle: 70%
- Rear-end: 6%
- Run-off Road: 7%
- Hit Tree/Shrub: 1%
- Hit Embankment: <1%
- Vehicle Failure: <1%
- Other Causes: 7%

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN NETWORKS

The need for more and better non-motorized infrastructure has to be described based on what's available now. According to recent data, Berks has:

Sidewalks

According to Berks County GIS data from 2016, there are 1,265 miles of sidewalk throughout the County. These are primarily located in Reading, older residential areas throughout the county, and generally in more urban settings. Unfortunately, during the housing booms from the 1970's to the 1990's, many housing developments were built next to each other with no sidewalk connections between them. Additionally, many commercial areas are separated from adjacent residential areas without convenient bike or pedestrian access.

Trails / Multi-use Paths

Berks County's GIS records over 524 miles of existing trails and multi-use paths that could serve a transportation role. This mileage does not include the multitude of recreational trails on Mount Penn,

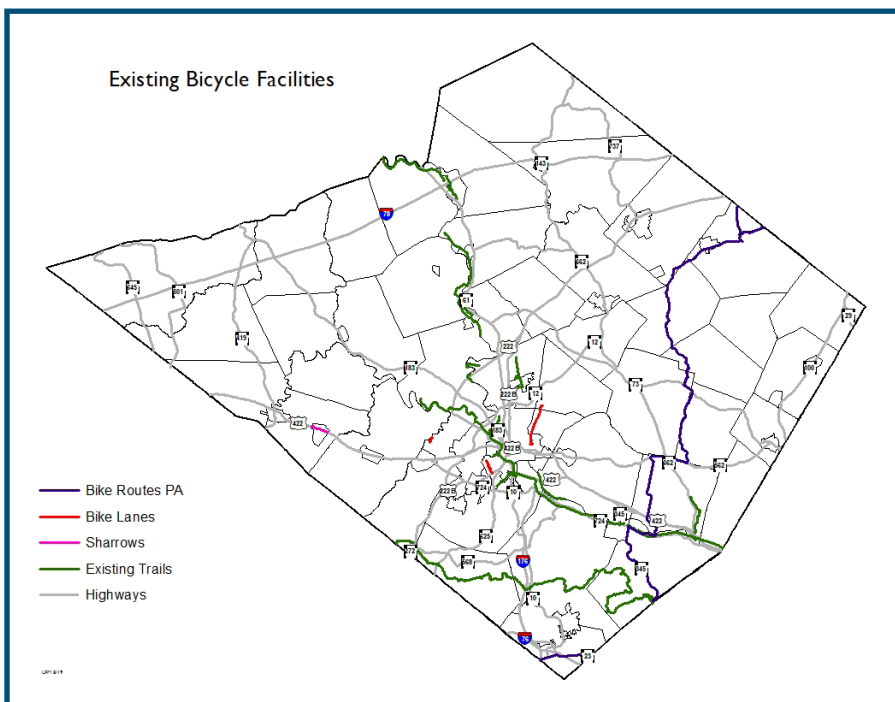
CURRENT STATE

The spine of existing trails and multi-use paths includes the Schuylkill River Trail.

Neversink Mountain, Blue Marsh Lake, French Creek State Park, and elsewhere throughout the county which would add another 289 miles. The spine of this network includes the Schuylkill River Trail that extends in various configurations through the county, and also connects to various other multi-use trails such as Berks County's Gring's Mill trail and Wyomissing Borough's trail system.

Bicycle Lanes and Shared Markings

Presently there are only three areas in Berks County that have formally-marked bike lanes. Spring Township has approximately ½ mile of Reedy Road marked near the Cacoosing Meadows Park. In Reading, Kenhorst Blvd. has been recently striped between Museum Rd. and Lancaster Ave. Finally, Reading, Lower Alsace and Alsace Townships cooperated on a project to repave Skyline Drive on Mount Penn. That project included improved stormwater drainage, signage, and a dual-lane, separated bike/pedestrian lane along the western wall of the road. Shared-lane Markings, also known as Sharrows, have recently been installed on Penn Ave. (U.S. 422) in Robesonia Borough.



Bicycle Routes

Pennsylvania's BicyclePA Route system provides a network of signed routes across the commonwealth. These routes are meant more for experienced cyclists undertaking long-distance touring. In many cases, shoulders may not be sufficient to get the cyclist out of traffic. Two of these routes come through Berks County. Route L crosses in a roughly north-south direction from the Lehigh Valley, through eastern Berks and exits in Chester County. Route S crosses extreme southern Berks in the Morgantown area, connecting Lancaster County with Chester County.

Network Gaps and Choke Points

An unfortunate reality in Berks is that some of the natural and manmade features that we find so enjoyable also create significant access issues for non-motorized travelers. Foremost among them is



CURRENT STATE

the Schuylkill River. Along its entire length through Berks, there are only five (5) bike/ped-only crossings: In Hamburg Borough along the Bartram section of the Schuylkill River Trail; in Reading across the county-owned bridge at RACC; just south of that point on the Thun Section of the Schuylkill River Trail are two crossings in the Poplar Neck area of Reading/Cumru Township; and the last crossing in Union/

Douglass townships just west of the county's eastern boundary. There are multiple crossings where cyclists and pedestrians are prohibited due to limited-access highways; and others where sharing the road with vehicles can be dangerous. It should be noted, however, that as river crossings are rehabilitated, pedestrian and bicycle access is being incorporated or improved. The best case of that is the Penn Street Bridge in Reading, where physical barriers separate cars from pedestrians, and a 5-foot shoulder was incorporated to allow better cycle access.

It has been noted in prior planning efforts that linkages between adjacent residential areas, commercial areas, employment centers, schools, recreation and other opportunities are missing throughout the county. Some may be only a few blocks; others are more significant. Municipalities are beginning to recognize the importance of these connections and actions are starting. Muhlenberg Township is currently undertaking a project improving pedestrian and transit access along the busy 5th Street Highway corridor near Bellevue Avenue. These improvements will help improve access to transit stops and facilitate easier connections between shopping centers.

Current and Future Projects

There are projects in various phases throughout Berks that will enhance the bicycle and pedestrian networks. In Reading, curb cuts are being installed along various streets prior to upcoming paving work. Additionally, the 18th WONDER organization in southwestern Reading will be undertaking multiple pedestrian and bicycle safety and access improvements in the Oakbrook neighborhood. Funding has been recently awarded to complete a separated multi-use path between RACC and Buttonwood Street. The Schuylkill River Greenway Association has received funding to continue the development of a grade-separated trail crossing of PA 724 in Union Township. Berks Nature recently completed their Angelica Creek Trail from Angelica Park to Ken-Grill Pool. Bike Share stations are becoming popular. Tower Health has a station for employee use at their West Reading Campus, with plans to expand. A station has also been established at the Reading Housing Authority's Oakbrook Homes. Birdsboro Borough is completing a sidewalk project in the Borough, and Topton Borough has received funding to connect residential areas with Memorial Park and the Brandywine School campus. Muhlenberg Township is completing pedestrian and transit stop improvements along a busy commercial stretch of U.S. 222 Business, and Exeter Township is also completing similar improvements along the Perkiomen Ave. corridor.

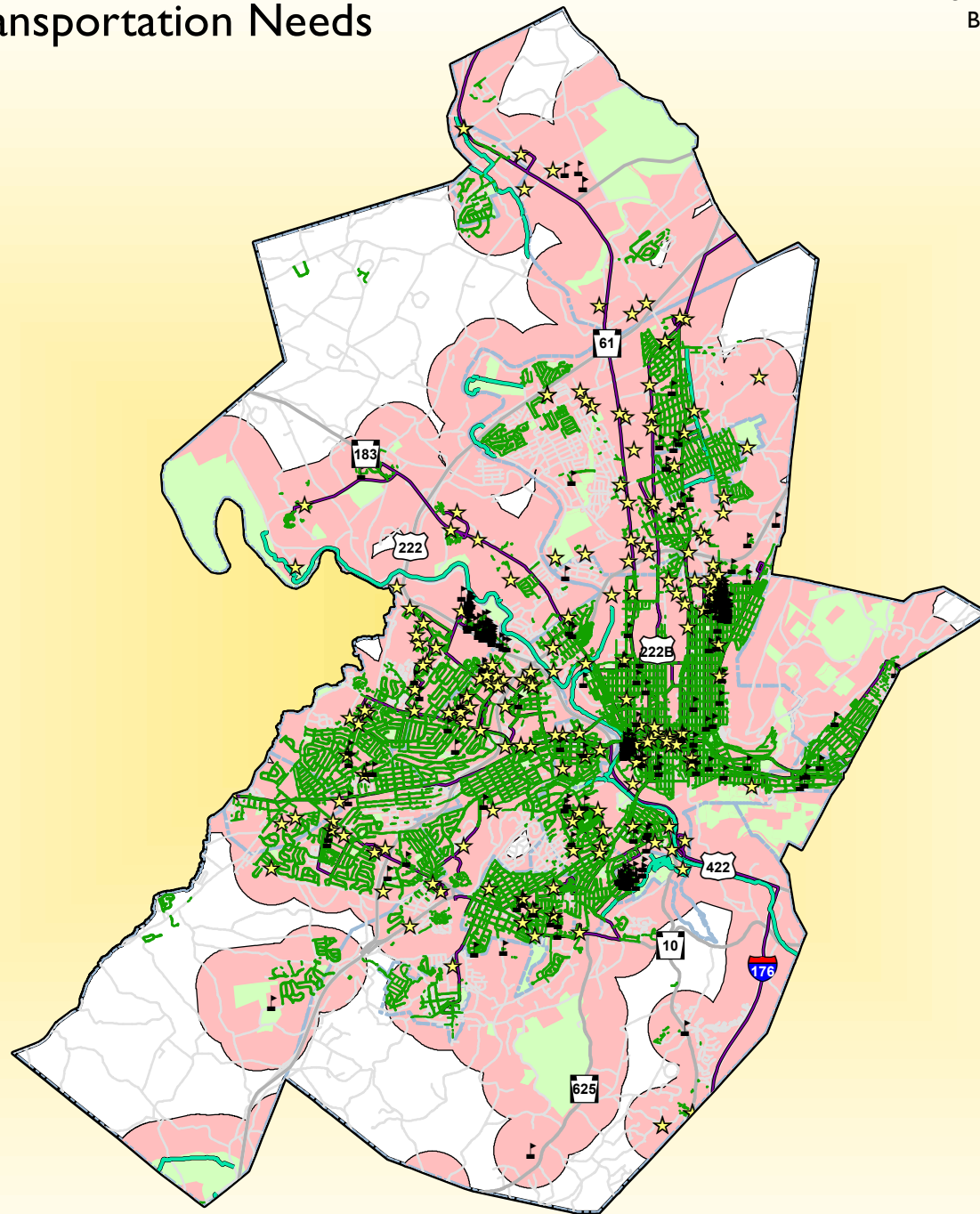
Potential Pedestrian Transportation Needs

Metro Region

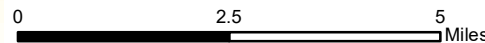
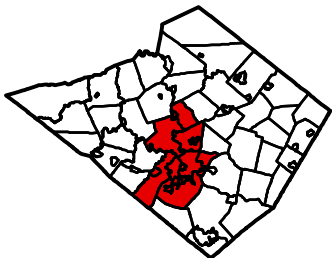
Berks County, PA



- Study Area *
- Educational Institution
- Major Employers **
- Trails
- Sidewalks
- BARTA Routes
- Highways
- Roads
- Parks and Recreation
- Municipal Boundaries



* 0.5 mile buffer from destinations
 ** Employers with 100 or more workers
 Source: Berks County Planning Commission GIS,
 Berks County Mapping, Berks County GIS, Berks County
 DES, BARTA, PennDOT, 2012-2016 5 Year ACS



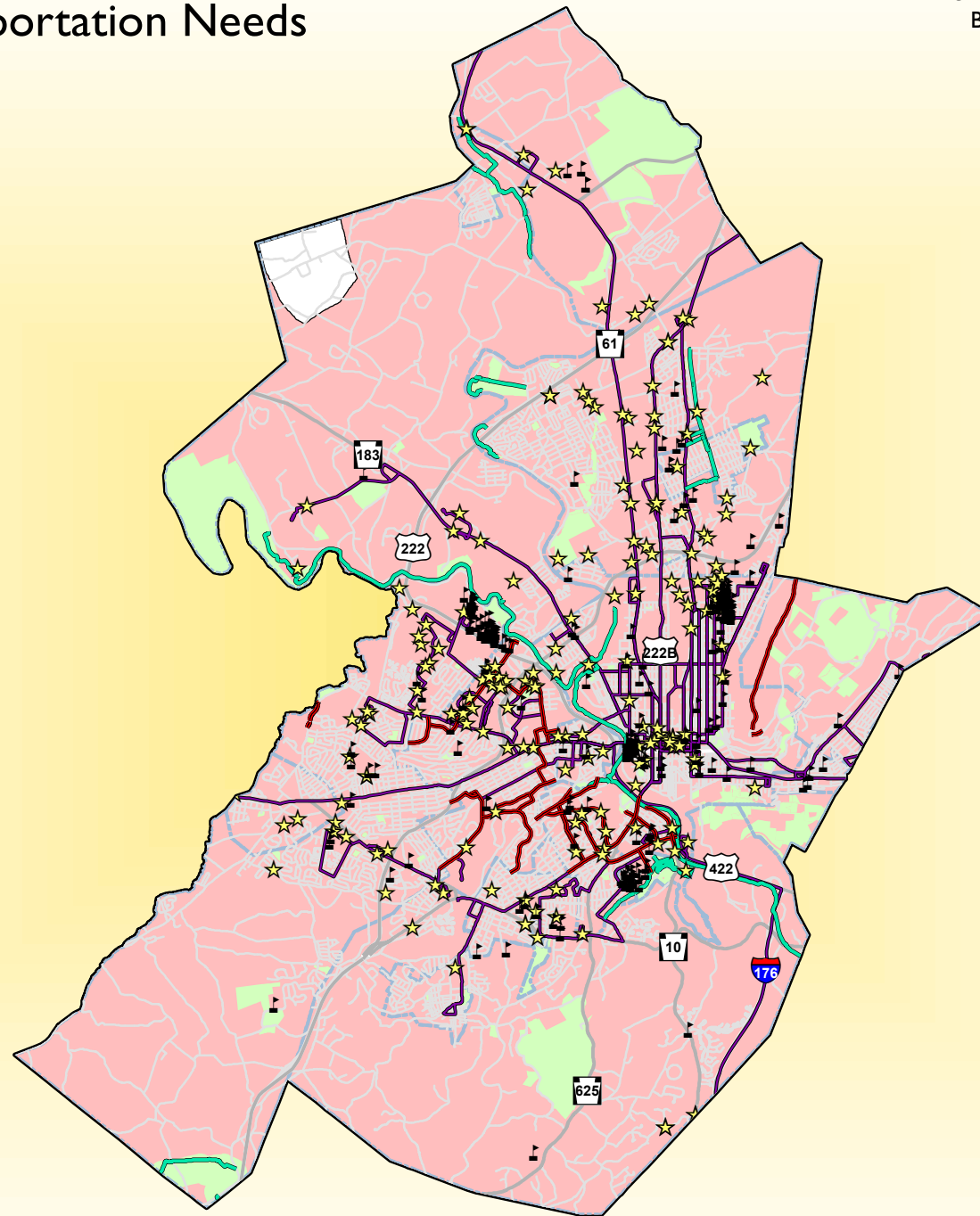
Potential Bicycle Transportation Needs

Metro Region

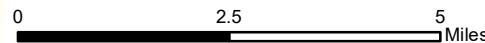
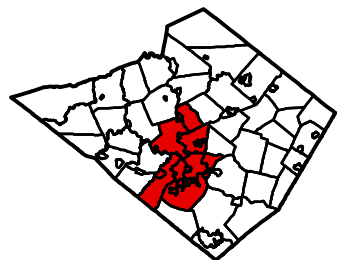
Berks County, PA



- Study Area *
- Educational Institution
- Major Employers **
- Bike Lanes
- Trails
- BARTA Routes
- Highways
- Roads
- Parks and Recreation
- Municipal Boundaries



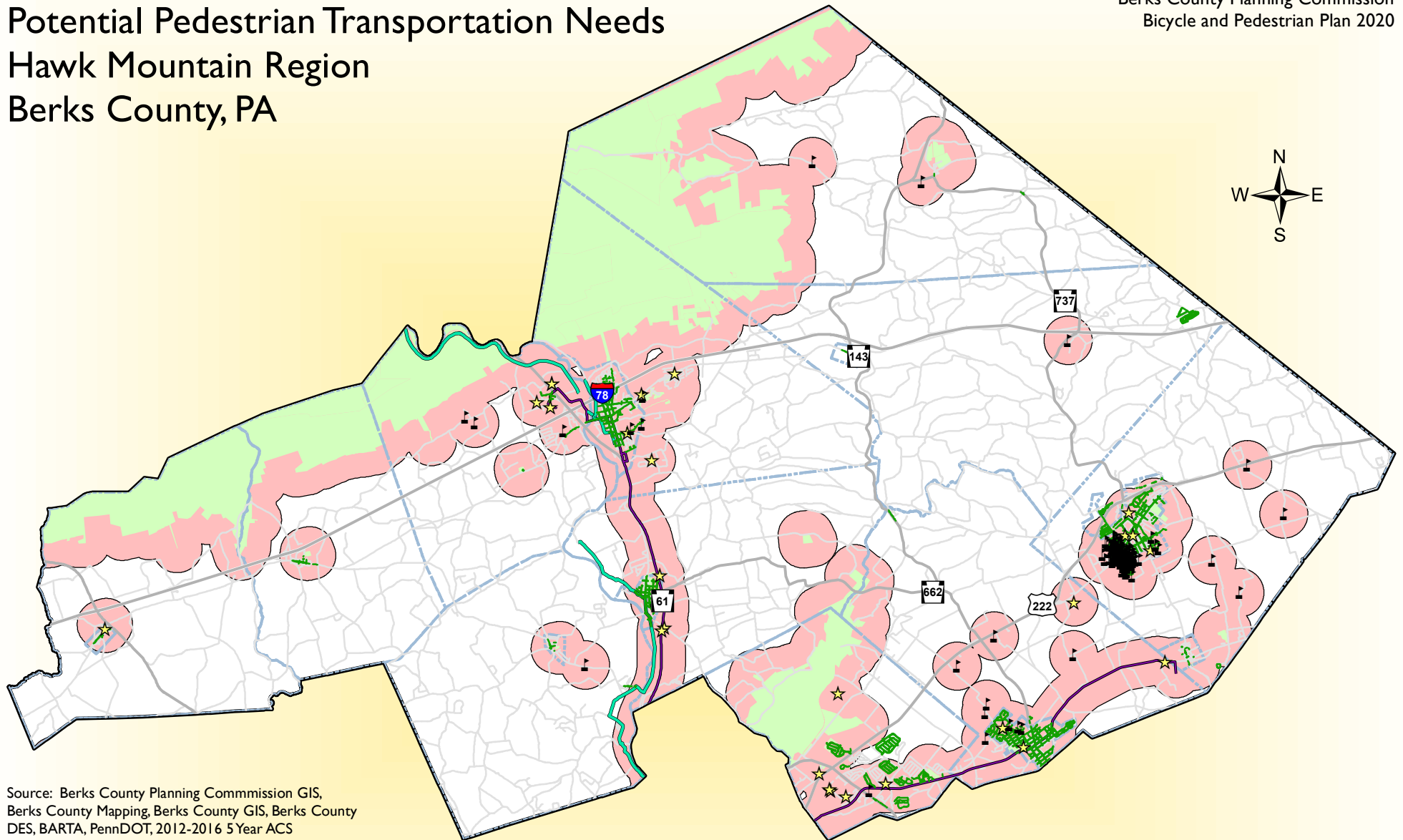
* 2 mile buffer from destinations
 ** Employers with 100 or more workers
 Source: Berks County Planning Commission GIS,
 Berks County Mapping, Berks County GIS, Berks County
 DES, BARTA, PennDOT, 2012-2016 5 Year ACS



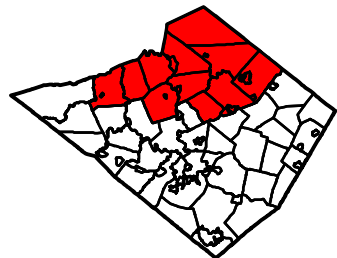
Potential Pedestrian Transportation Needs

Hawk Mountain Region

Berks County, PA



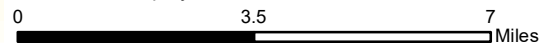
Source: Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County Mapping, Berks County GIS, Berks County DES, BARTA, PennDOT, 2012-2016 5 Year ACS



- Study Area *
- Parks and Recreation
- Municipal Boundaries
- Educational Institution
- BARTA Routes
- Highways
- Trails
- Sidewalks
- Roads
- Major Employers **

* 0.5 mile buffer from destinations

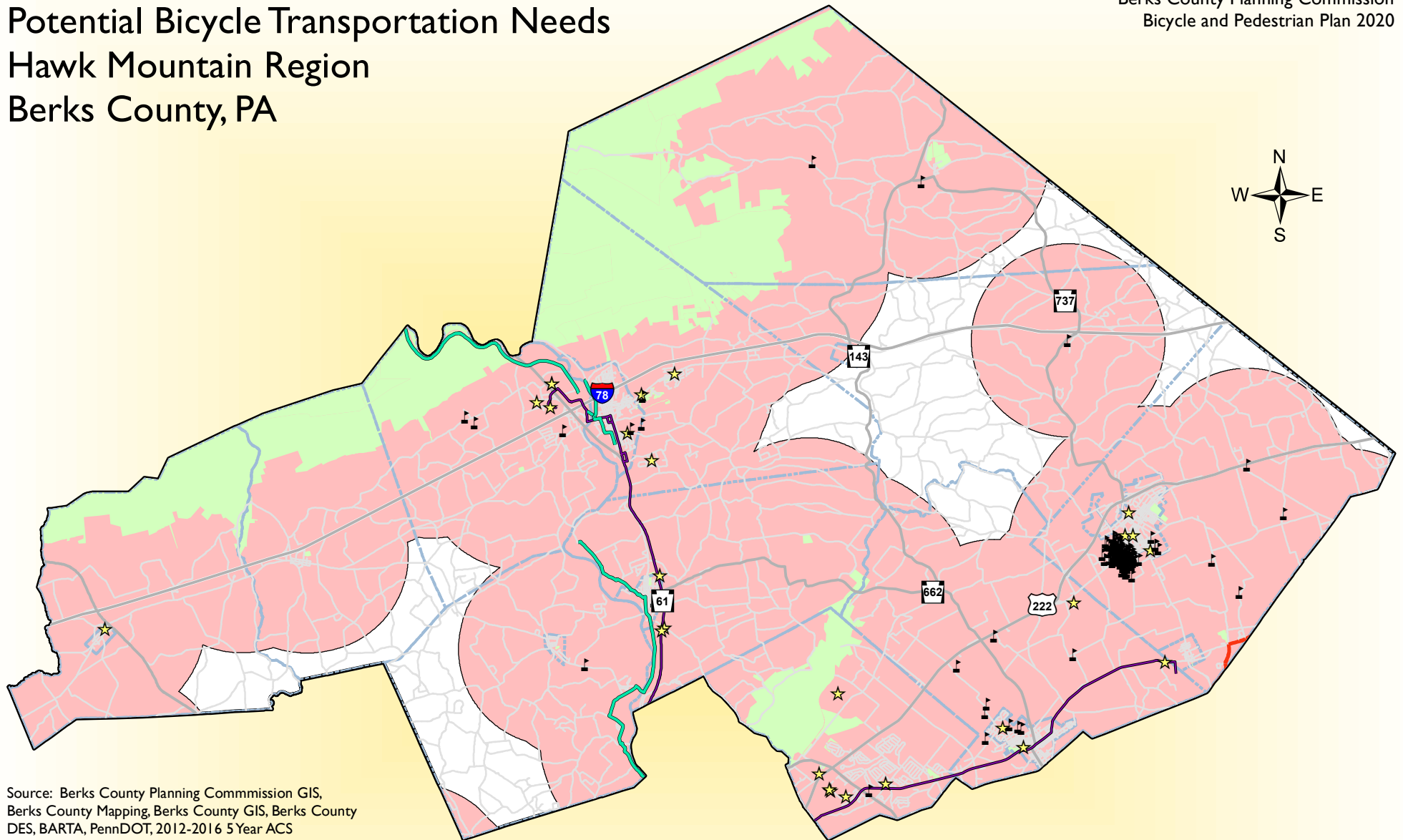
** Employers with 100 or more workers



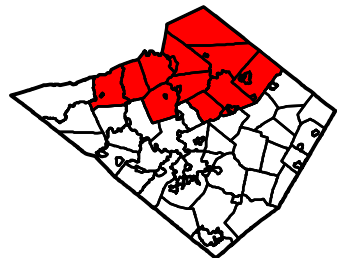
Potential Bicycle Transportation Needs

Hawk Mountain Region

Berks County, PA

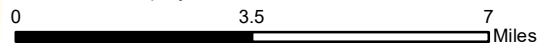


Source: Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County Mapping, Berks County GIS, Berks County DES, BARTA, PennDOT, 2012-2016 5 Year ACS



- | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Study Area * | Bicycle PA Routes | Roads |
| Educational Institution | BARTA Routes | Parks and Recreation |
| Major Employers ** | Highways | Municipal Boundaries |
| Trails | | |

* 2 mile buffer from destinations
** Employers with 100 or more workers

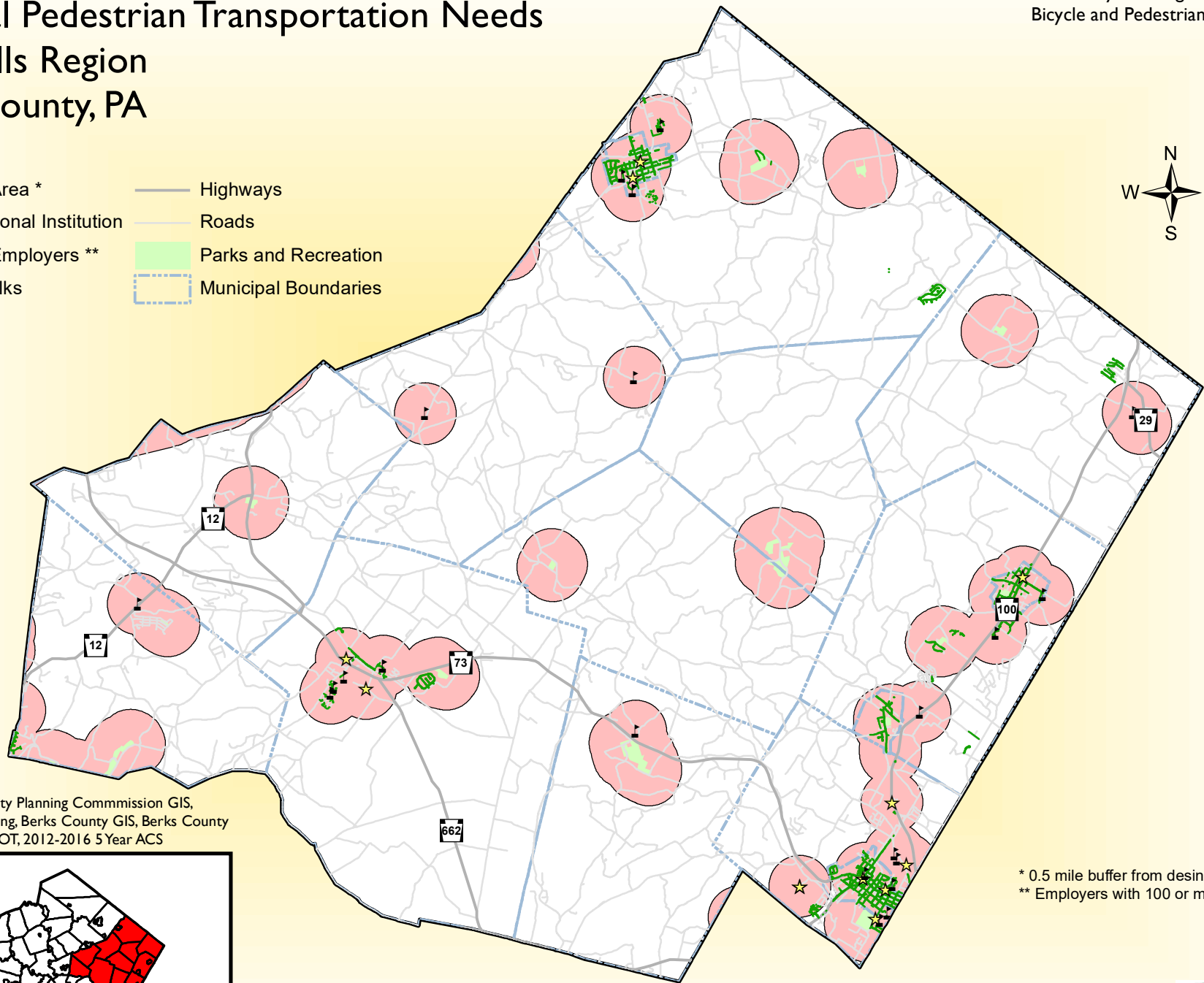


Potential Pedestrian Transportation Needs

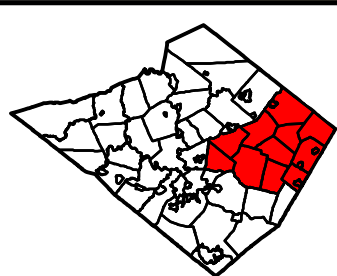
Oley Hills Region

Berks County, PA

- Study Area *
- Educational Institution
- Major Employers **
- Sidewalks
- Highways
- Roads
- Parks and Recreation
- Municipal Boundaries



Source: Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County Mapping, Berks County GIS, Berks County DES, BARTA, PennDOT, 2012-2016 5 Year ACS



* 0.5 mile buffer from destinations
** Employers with 100 or more workers

0 2.5 5 Miles

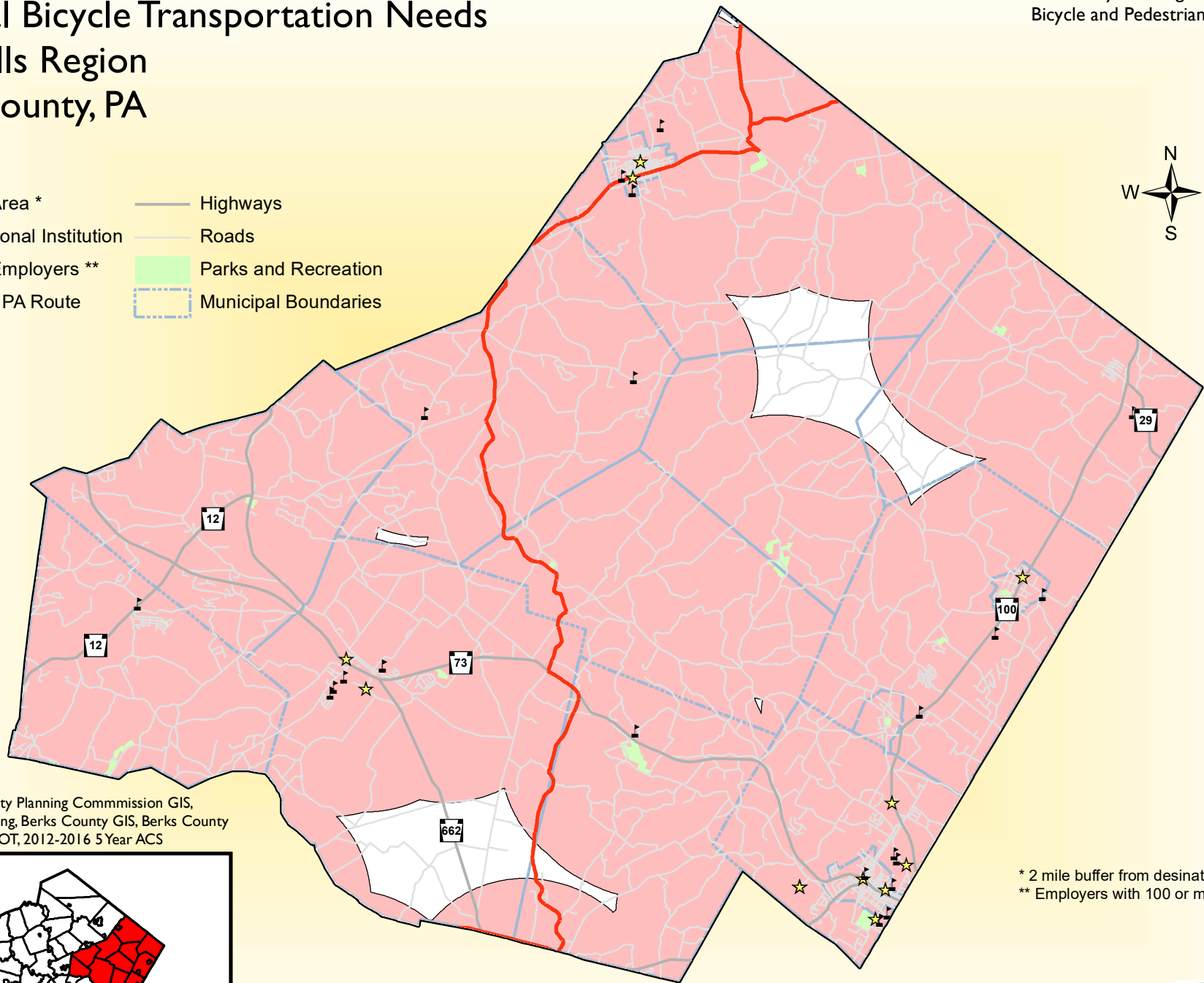


Potential Bicycle Transportation Needs

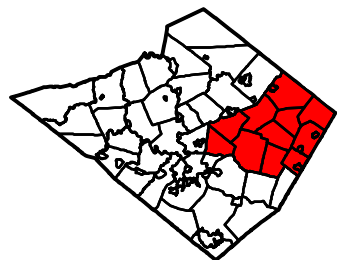
Oley Hills Region

Berks County, PA

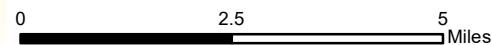
- Study Area *
- Educational Institution
- Major Employers **
- Bicycle PA Route
- Highways
- Roads
- Parks and Recreation
- Municipal Boundaries



Source: Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County Mapping, Berks County GIS, Berks County DES, BARTA, PennDOT, 2012-2016 5 Year ACS



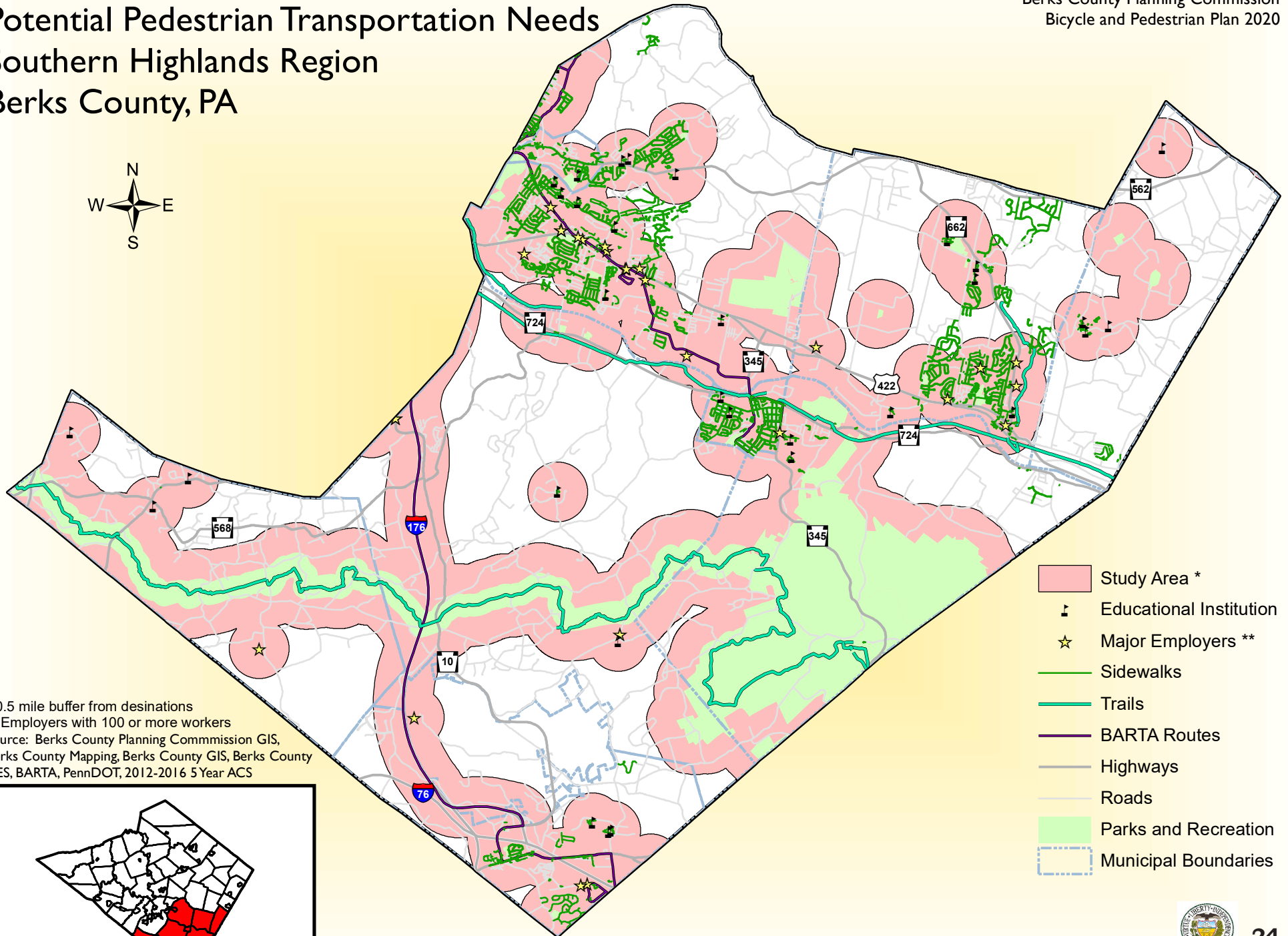
* 2 mile buffer from destinations
** Employers with 100 or more workers



Potential Pedestrian Transportation Needs

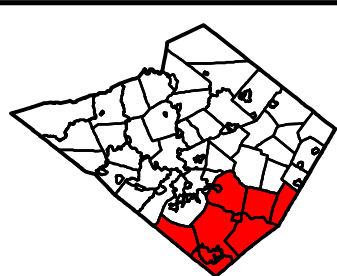
Southern Highlands Region

Berks County, PA



- Study Area *
- Educational Institution
- Major Employers **
- Sidewalks
- Trails
- BARTA Routes
- Highways
- Roads
- Parks and Recreation
- Municipal Boundaries

* 0.5 mile buffer from destinations
 ** Employers with 100 or more workers
 Source: Berks County Planning Commission GIS,
 Berks County Mapping, Berks County GIS, Berks County
 DES, BARTA, PennDOT, 2012-2016 5 Year ACS



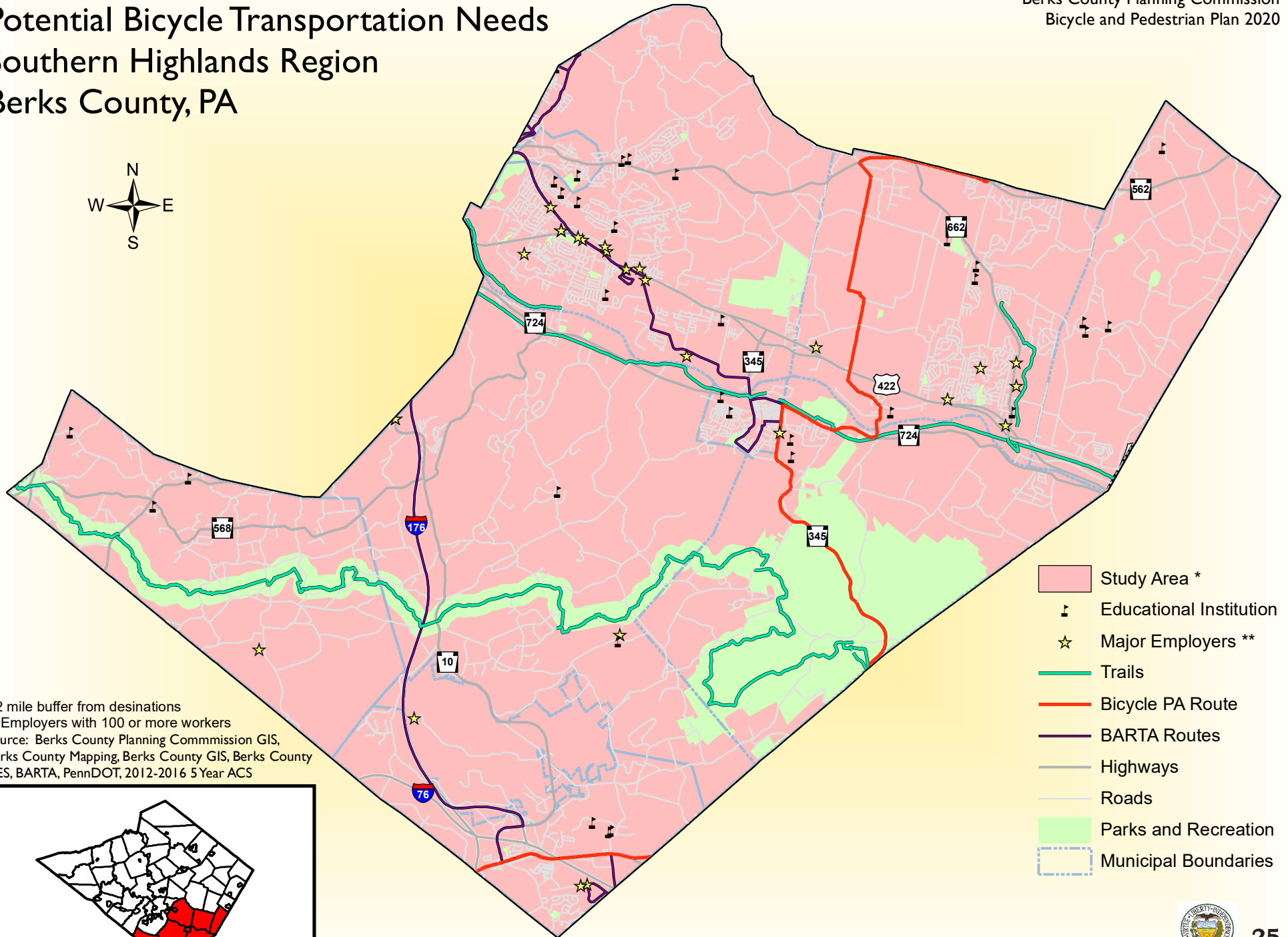
0 2.5 5 Miles



Potential Bicycle Transportation Needs

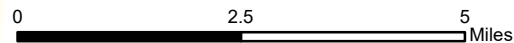
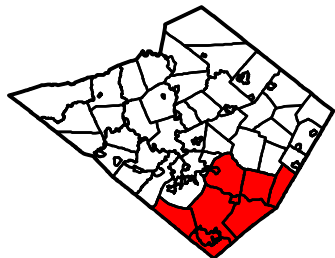
Southern Highlands Region

Berks County, PA



- Study Area *
- Educational Institution
- Major Employers **
- Trails
- Bicycle PA Route
- BARTA Routes
- Highways
- Roads
- Parks and Recreation
- Municipal Boundaries

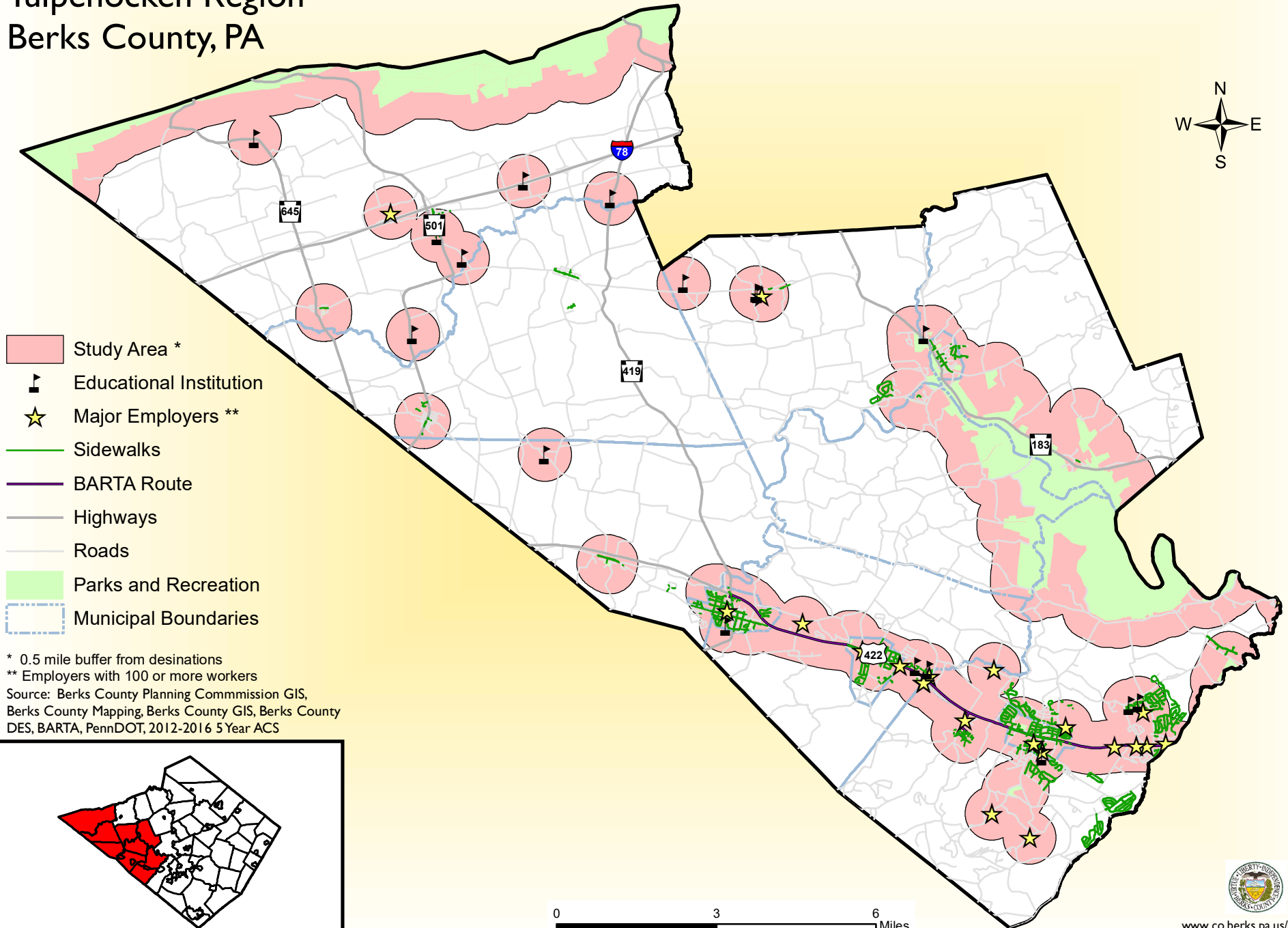
* 2 mile buffer from destinations
 ** Employers with 100 or more workers
 Source: Berks County Planning Commission GIS,
 Berks County Mapping, Berks County GIS, Berks County
 DES, BARTA, PennDOT, 2012-2016 5 Year ACS



Potential Pedestrian Transportation Needs

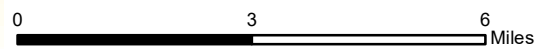
Tulpehocken Region

Berks County, PA



- Study Area *
- Educational Institution
- Major Employers **
- Sidewalks
- BARTA Route
- Highways
- Roads
- Parks and Recreation
- Municipal Boundaries

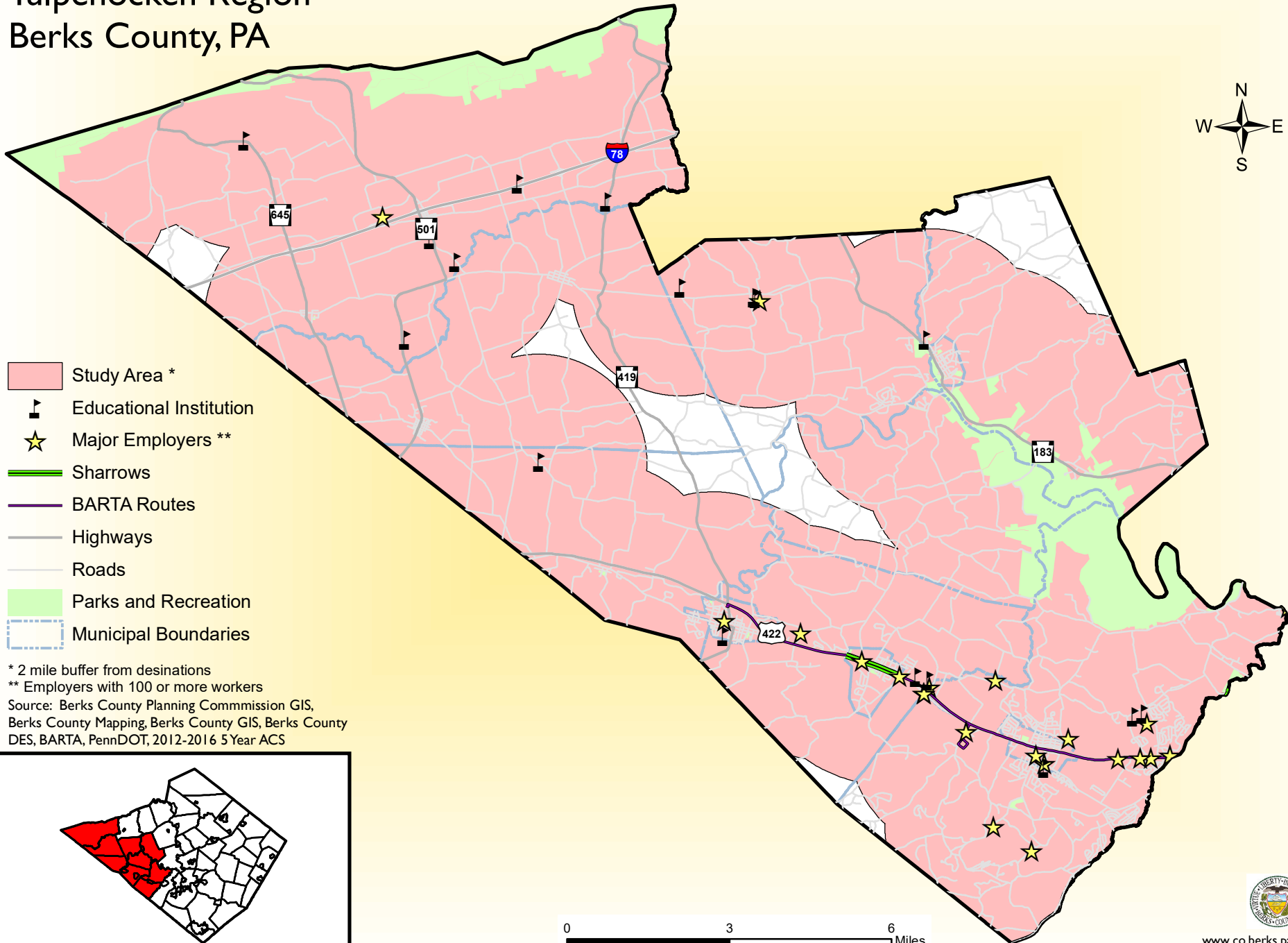
* 0.5 mile buffer from destinations
 ** Employers with 100 or more workers
 Source: Berks County Planning Commission GIS,
 Berks County Mapping, Berks County GIS, Berks County
 DES, BARTA, PennDOT, 2012-2016 5 Year ACS



Potential Bicycle Transportation Needs

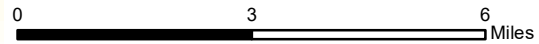
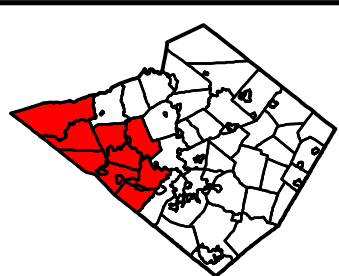
Tulpehocken Region

Berks County, PA



- Study Area *
- Educational Institution
- Major Employers **
- Sharrows
- BARTA Routes
- Highways
- Roads
- Parks and Recreation
- Municipal Boundaries

* 2 mile buffer from destinations
 ** Employers with 100 or more workers
 Source: Berks County Planning Commission GIS,
 Berks County Mapping, Berks County GIS, Berks County
 DES, BARTA, PennDOT, 2012-2016 5 Year ACS





TRANSIT

The principal provider of public transportation services in Berks County is the South Central Transit Authority (SCTA). This authority oversees the Berks Area Regional Transportation Authority (BARTA). BARTA operates a traditional fixed route bus system operating in the City of Reading and the surrounding urban area consisting of 17 Boroughs and 15 Townships. From July 1, 2017 through

June 30, 2018, BARTA operated 50 fixed route buses serving 39 bus shelters, 1,475 bus stops, and 2,903,786 passengers along 19 fixed routes.

PLANNING FOR TRANSIT

SCTA acting as a consolidated administrative authority for BARTA and Red Rose Transit Authority (RRTA) has undertaken a Transit Development Plan (TDP) of transit services in Berks and Lancaster Counties. The TDP, a 10-year plan, was developed to identify service improvements to better serve existing riders, improve the overall efficiency of BARTA and RRTA, and attract more riders.

The TDP identifies pedestrian and bicycle access as part of bus stop improvements. This plan recognizes that most transit riders are pedestrians or bicyclists before or after their ride on the transit system, and therefore, each bus stop should have safe and defined pathways to and from local destinations, safe sidewalk access, and be located near a crosswalk.

Another improvement identified in the TDP important to the Berks County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan would be integration with surrounding development. Bus stop locations should be considered early in the design process of new developments including pedestrian and bicycle access to these stops. Another concept the TDP mentions is how road and sidewalk reconstruction and new bicycle infrastructure could affect the quality of bus stops and transit operations. By considering transit in new developments and improvements to existing infrastructure, developers and planners can aid in providing a better, more accessible transit system for those riders.

Pedestrian Access

Most transit riders travel 10 minutes or less to and from the bus stop. Therefore, maintaining and improving the existing pedestrian infrastructure around bus stops is important. The previous set of figures showing Potential Pedestrian Transportation Needs shows a ½ mile buffer along BARTA's fixed route system. Pedestrian improvements within this buffer are key to providing safe and convenient access to and from transit stops. Within this buffer, near bus stops and major destinations, pedestrian improvements should include:

TRANSIT

- Accessible sidewalks or safe, wide shoulders
- Well-marked crosswalks
- Pedestrian push buttons
- Pedestrian signs
- Curb ramps
- Sufficient lighting



These improvements should also be considered by municipalities looking to include a transit-friendly infrastructure into their ordinances and zoning for new land developments.

Bicycle Access

Providing bike racks on buses was identified as a priority in the 2002 Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan for Berks County. BARTA was allocated money from CMAQ funds through the Reading MPO to start introducing this improvement and over the past 15 years has continued to provide bike racks on all buses. All bikes 16” or larger fit securely on the racks. This provides commuting cyclists with the opportunity to combine bicycling and transit as a way to commute during inclement weather. It also allows bicycling transit users to access bus stops from a greater distance.

The preceding maps showing Potential Bicycle Transportation needs show a 2-mile buffer along BARTA’s fixed route system. This represents the distance a beginner or average cyclist can travel in 10 minutes to access bus stops along the fixed route system. Within this buffer, near bus stops and major destinations, bicycling improvements should include marked bicycle lanes, sharrows, or wide, safe shoulders.