CHAPTER G

TRANSPORTATION SUMMARY

1. Introduction

Lower Merion Township, like many communities, is an accumulation of different development patterns. Each of these patterns was influenced by physical locations, and economic, social, and technological factors. These development patterns have also been effected by the availability and condition of transportation routes and systems, which link neighborhoods together to form urban areas.

Lower Merion is a residential community situated between the suburban and central Philadelphia employment centers. Highway routes and bus and rail systems have developed within the township linking the municipality to other Philadelphia urban and suburban areas. Because of the interdependency of the transportation system, the entire network is operated by various local, regional and federal agencies that plan, develop, and maintain the total system. This section of the report therefore analyzes Lower Merion's transportation system within the framework of the entire regional system.

2. Official Highway Map

Act 247, Article IV, Sections 401 through 408 calls for the adoption of an official highway map, which the township has accomplished. This map serves as a guideline for making decisions about capital improvements, subdivision activity and street network maintenance. Moreover, the map identifies the existing street system considered necessary to provide for present and anticipated vehicular volumes.

The streets have been placed into the following categories in accordance with stated functions and design capabilities: freeways, primary arterials, secondary arterials, tertiary, and minor streets.

3. Road Jurisdictions

Some of the roads in the township are part of the regional highway system, and on these major roads the State accepts responsibility for maintenance and improvements. All other roads and streets in the township are the responsibility of the township.

4. Existing Traffic Patterns and Volumes

Traffic volumes on the major roads in the township provide a measure of the use and adequacy of the Lower Merion Highway System. The heaviest flow is along the Schuylkill Expressway in the western and northern portions of the township, along City Line Avenue in the south, and along Lancaster Avenue in the southwestern portion of the township.

The Schuylkill Expressway supports the largest volume of traffic with an average daily count over a twenty-four hour period of 73,000 between City Line Avenue and Belmont Avenue. Volumes along City Line Avenue reach a high of 39,000 between the Schuylkill Expressway and Belmont Avenue, then gradually decrease to 33,900 as one proceeds south between Lancaster Avenue and Haverford Road. Lancaster Avenue carries the third heaviest traffic volume in the township with counts of 20,100, but a gradual decrease occurs as one travels west toward Radnor Township.

Other substantial traffic volumes are found on the following highways:

	Average Annual Daily Count
. Rock Hill Road	9,400
. W. Wynnewood Road	12,000
. Ardmore Avenue	10,500
. Spring Mill Road	6,900 - 11,000
. Conshohocken State Road	7,700 - 12,700
. Hollow Road	12,500
. Belmont Avenue	10,700 - 15,000
. Haverford Road	16,700 - 13,700
. Bryn Mawr Avenue (Lancaster & County Line)	9,500
. Argyle Road	5,000
. Remington Road	8,794
. E. Wynnewood Road	5,565 - 6,869

These traffic counts reflect the overal geographical position of the township. A further explanation of traffic flow volume can be made by noting distribution patterns. For instance, at Lancaster Avenue, the traffic count of 20,100 vehicles dips to 17,200 after Remington Road has been crossed. The most likely reason for this drop in volume is the large number of vehicles that turn towards Lankenau Hospital.

Roads that intersect the expressway such as Spring Mill, Conshohocken State Road, Rock Hill Road and Belmont Avenue, also exceed their carrying capacity at peak hours.

The township conducts traffic surveys in order to improve the health, safety, and welfare of the residents. The demand

for traffic counts is usually derived from public observations of correctable traffic patterns, high accident areas, or a desire to locate traffic signals for pedestrian and automotive safety. Because of the request procedure, the number and location of counts vary by year. Traffic counts are used to determine if corrective action is necessary. If improvements are needed, they are scheduled in the capital improvements program as requests for new traffic signals, or turning lane additions, wider shoulders, or street improvements, etc.

5. Mass Transit

Public mass transportation is available in certain portions of the township. Bus and rail line service exists in the south-east and west-central portions of the township while the north-central and western sections remain without mass transit.

A. Railroad Service

Passenger train service in Lower Merion is supplied by the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transit Authority's (SEPTA) High Speed Line and Conrail trains. The High Speed Line traverses Lower Merion only in the township's western corner. However, quite a few stations are located just outside the township and are within easy access of Lower Merion's residents. There are two high speed line stations, County Line Station on County Line Road near the mid-county expressway, and the Conshohocken Road Station located on Montgomery Avenue and Matsons Ford Road. The line runs between Norristown and 69th Street in Upper Darby. At 69th Street, passengers can transfer to the Market Street El which continues into center city Philadelphia.

SEPTA also operates two Conrail lines through the township. The first line is the Manayunk - Philadelphia line. This commuter rail line has three stations located within the township; the Bala, the Cynwyd, and the Barmouth stations. (One can also cross the river at Belmont Avenue to use the Manayunk Station.) The second line supplies the township with seven stations. From south to west, they are as follows: Merion, Narberth, Wynnewood, Ardmore, Haverford, Bryn Mawr, and Rosemont. Finally, these two rail lines provide a one-mode service to both 30th Street Amtrak and subway stations and to the Suburban Station located in center city Philadelphia.

Fares are reasonable, with special rates available for senior citizens and non-peak hour riders. Many of the rail lines connect with bus routes and thereby provide a more coordinated system.

B. Bus Service

Bus service in Lower Merion is provided by eleven routes located mostly in the southeastern sections of the township. The routes are as follows:

Line E: Germantown to 69th and Market Streets to Whitemarsh Township via City Line Avenue and Expressway

Line F: 52nd and Lancaster Avenue along Belmont Avenue

Line Z: Overbrook to Paoli via Lancaster Avenue

Line 38: Broad Street to Saint Asaphs Road and returns on City Line Avenue and Presidential Boulevard

Line 44: 5th and Market to City Line Avenue by the expressway to Lancaster Avenue until Montgomery Ave. for return loop

Line 44G: Bala Cynwyd to Gladwyne via Conshohocken State Road

Line 68: Gladwyne to Darby

Line 69: Bala to Manayunk by way of Ashland Avenue and Conshohocken State Road

Line 103: 69th Street Terminal to Ardmore

Line 105: 69th Street Terminal to Ardmore (stops at Wynnewood Shopping Center)

Line 106: 69th Street Terminal to Strafford travelling on Haverford Road

The buses also provide peak hour service for both school children and working adults.

C. Commuter Rail Station Improvements

Of the nine rail stations located in the township, four are proposed for a variety of station and parking improvements and five are proposed for simple lighting improvements. The four stations that will receive major work are:

1. Bryn Mawr Station
2. Rosemont Station
3. Bala Station
4. Cynwyd Station

D. Summary and Conclusion

The efficiency and fiscal health of public transportation facilities are of vital importance to the township, not only to serve its own citizens directly, but because the township's position in the region renders it especially vulnerable to the effect of through traffic. Increased use of public transportation would give positive relief to highway congestion and reduce energy consumption, while any reduction in public transportation service or use would increase congestion. Because the following suggestions for improvements are not township capital budget obligations, it is recommended that the appropriate regional agencies consider these items to upgrade public service:

- The extension of a mini-bus service through Gladwyne.
- The establishment of bus slots within the township to prevent traffic congestion and to increase public safety.
- The location of bus stops and lay-over areas so as to facilitate transfer between bus and rail facilities.
- Encouragement of concentrated development along existing public transportation corridors.
- The development of transportation links between counties rather than just between suburban areas and Center City Philadelphia.