

South Main Street Improvement Project Information

What is the South Main Street Improvement Project?

This project includes improvements along Main Street between Perkiomen Avenue and 41 Main Street funded with federal Community Development Block Grant dollars. The design and engineering costs are paid for by the Borough of Schwenksville.

- Selective road widening to allow for 11' travel lanes, parking lanes on both sides of the street where width permits, and sidewalks for pedestrians
- Striping of a modified turn lane at Perkiomen Ave
- Replaced curbing and sidewalk
- Dedicated parking lanes with 15-17 marked parking spaces (has changed during review process)
- Three small bump-outs
- Planning for future streetscaping improvements such as ornamental street lighting.

The project is currently in the permitting stage. After a Highway Occupancy Permit is obtained from PennDot, the bid specifications and design need to be finalized and then advertised for bids. Construction is anticipated for summer 2015 with completion expected by September 2015. This project was granted an extension from the original 2014 completion date and must be completed by September 2015 to satisfy the grant requirements.

Why did the Borough pursue this project?

Improving pedestrian flow and infrastructure is not a new initiative. The Borough's first Revitalization Plan was completed in 2002 and encouraged improvements in pedestrian and vehicular safety, including a northbound turn lane on Main Street at Perkiomen Avenue. The Borough adopted a new and updated Community Revitalization Plan in 2010. This plan was developed after going through a Community Visioning process with the assistance of the Montgomery County Planning Commission and a Schwenksville Borough Revitalization Task Force composed of residents, business owners and community members interested in improving Schwenksville Borough. Improving pedestrian facilities and sidewalks, utilizing traffic calming techniques and facilitating safety improvements for pedestrians and vehicles along Main Street are stated objectives of the Revitalization Plan.

Why did the Borough choose to start Main Street Improvements on South Main Street?

The Borough chose to start Main Street improvements on South Main Street because of the poor condition of the sidewalks and inadequate street width for parking on both sides of the street, as indicated by cars parking on sidewalks and curbs. This block was perceived as the one most in need of traffic safety improvements. It was not striped like the rest of Main Street in 2012 because the issues on South Main Street required more in-depth study, including the ability to widen the road to obtain the necessary width safe parking on both sides of the street.



Are there plan to make similar improvements elsewhere on Main Street?

The Borough's intent is to continue to pursue funding sources to build on this first phase of improvements, both expanding improvements to other blocks of Main Street and by adding additional elements such as street lighting, ornamental traffic signals, decorations and other ornamental features.

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What have been the challenges to this project?

Physical Limitations: Limited public right-of-way to work within, number of obstructions in the sidewalks to address (telephone poles, fire hydrants), the proximity of residential structures to the public right-of-way (small front yards) and the location of driveways. The number of parking spaces that can be physically and safely located on the street is determined by design safety criteria and the location of driveways and other obstructions. Design changes have been made to maximize the number of street parking spots available wherever design criteria will allow. In several instances the plan has made concessions to facilitate additional parking.

Design Criteria: The Borough has to satisfy state, federal and funding source requirements in order to spend the money. These requirements affect design elements such as crosswalks (had to remove a proposed crosswalk because it did not satisfy PennDot criteria), sidewalk widths, curb heights, travel lane widths, turning lane length and other similar considerations.

Financial Budget: The Borough's funding from the grant is \$188,760 for construction improvements. The cost of engineering design and inspection is paid for using local tax dollars. Due to the many challenges and the Borough's diligence in attempting to address them, engineering expenses will be over budget by the time the project is completed.

Project Priorities: Residents of South Main Street have expressed a desire to prioritize quantity of parking spaces over and above safety and traffic calming priorities proposed in the 2014-2015 Improvement Project. Residents have also expressed need for off-street parking. This project does not address that need. The Borough's priority is improving the safety of existing parking and pedestrian facilities for the community as a whole. While the Borough is supportive of exploring off-street parking alternatives for South Main Street residents, the right solution and funding sources for acquisition, construction and maintenance have yet to be identified.

Left Turn Lane: The center-line of Main Street was adjusted in 2012 to address PennDot's concerns about traffic flow that was raised upon review of the Borough's Plans to formalize parking along Main Street north of Perkiomen Avenue. Recognizing the impact on parking close to the intersection, the lane adjustment was a compromise. Existing width today includes a 14' southbound lane and a 20.5' northbound lane that accommodates cars waiting to turn left onto Perkiomen Avenue, but is insufficient to satisfy minimum safety criteria for parking lanes. The Borough Planning Commission reviewed the South Main Street Construction Plan and endorsed the need for the dedicated turn lane for the good of the Borough deeming it to be a necessary public safety improvement even at the expense of several parking spots that have been historically utilized.

Public Parking: On street parking is public parking located within the Public Right-of-way. The Borough is working toward the goal of improving the safety of public parking and pedestrian facilities along all of Main Street for residents and members of the public at-large to use. However, because many private properties on South Main Street do not have any or sufficient off-street parking, those residents are the principal users of the parking and view the parking as an extension of their properties. It should be noted, the current Borough Ordinance does not allow for any new residence to have no off-street parking. The properties without off-street parking have been "grandfathered" due to the hardship enforcing current parking regulations/standards would impose.

Current and historical Parking Patterns: Parking spaces are not currently delineated and setbacks from driveways and fire hydrants are not marked, nor are safety minimums for lane widths apparent, creating a perception that vehicles can park anywhere. Having to satisfy minimum design criteria for these parking spaces along with minimum lane widths acceptable to PennDot result in the currently unrestricted parking (by regulations, paint or signage) becoming restricted by delineated parking spaces and no parking zones. In public commentary this has been expressed as "a loss of parking".

Traffic Calming Techniques: The Borough Engineer's Traffic Engineer was consulted on Traffic Calming applications that have been successful elsewhere and that could be tried on South Main Street. The techniques recommended for South Main Street include line striping for defined lanes (travel and parking), markings for vehicle movements,

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the painting of 25 MPH on the highway, the use of bump-outs and additional street lighting (future improvement). Public comment has indicated skepticism over the utility of these improvements.

Public Relations: Residents of South Main Street have voiced the opinion that Borough Officials are not listening to them or do not care about their concerns, principally because the Borough continues to move forward with the project. The Borough has been listening to the public comments and the plan has evolved and changed repeatedly throughout the design process in response to those concerns. However, the Borough must look at the needs of the whole community as well as the desires of current residents of one neighborhood and the project continues to be moved forward towards implementation.

Did the Borough Invite the Public to Comment on this Project?

Three meetings held specifically for the purpose of reviewing and taking public comment on the South Main Street Improvement Project have been held. Residents and property owners with South Main Street property addresses were invited by U.S. Mail to attend the meetings. The first one was held on June 13, 2013. At this point, the application for Grant Funds had been submitted to the County for review and consideration, but the project had not been approved and was not under contract. Montgomery County conducted a 30 day public comment period and took public Comment at their August 1, 2013 Commissioner's Meeting. The second Borough meeting was on May 21, 2014. The project was under contract with the County and in the preliminary design phase. The third meeting was December 4, 2014. This meeting was scheduled to specifically discuss the history of parking related issues on South Main Street and to review the proposed design for parking as proposed for the South Main Street Improvement project. Public Comment and updates were also permitted and given at monthly Council Meetings between February 2013 through the present. All comments were taken under advisement and efforts to address concerns and incorporate suggestions where feasible were taken while still moving forward with the project.

Why is the Borough Continuing with this project?

Grant Opportunities to make safety improvements to the Main Street Corridor that will address the hazards created by years of neglect; uneven, poorly maintained sidewalks, insufficient width for parking on both sides of the street without cars parking on and obstructing sidewalks, and cars stacking for left turns, do not come available in sufficient funding amounts regularly. They are highly competitive. The Borough understands that achieving its Revitalization goals and objectives as outlined in the official Revitalization Plan will take time and can only be achieved in incremental steps. Addressing safety and maintenance concerns is a necessary first step down the long road to improving the streetscaping and enhancing the Borough's unique identity, history and cultural and natural amenities, while providing a path towards future improvements and prosperity that will benefit the entire Borough and community.