state college area
CONNECTOR

PennDOT.gov/SCAC

Notice of Intent Additional Project Information Document

State College Area Connector Project
Environmental Impact Statement

This Notice of Intent (NOI) Additional Project Information document supplements the NOI published in the Federal Register. This document contains detailed plans for an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that will be prepared to study potential improvements to US 322 also known as the State College Area Connector project. The project includes the proposed construction of an approximately 8-mile four-lane limited access facility from the end of US 322/Mount Nittany Expressway in Boalsburg to the newly constructed limited access portion of US 322 at Potters Mills in Centre County, Pennsylvania. The NOI Additional Project Information document and the NOI published in the Federal Register should be read together. Agencies, stakeholders, and the public are invited to comment on the Environmental Analysis Methodologies, Preliminary Purpose and Need, Preliminary Range of Alternatives, or any other aspect of the proposed action. Instructions for submitting comments may be found in the NOI. Comments must be received within 30 days after the date of the NOI publication in the Federal Register.

Project Identification #: 112784

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Project Description

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), is initiating National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) activities as part of an EIS for an 8-mile 4-lane limited-access facility from the end of US 322/Mount Nittany Expressway in Boalsburg to the newly constructed limited access portion of US 322 at Potters Mills in Centre County, Pennsylvania. The intent of this project is to build upon the State College Area Connector Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) document that evaluated a range of alternatives, and through a quantitative and qualitative screening process identified three Build Alternative corridor options for further study in NEPA and established the NEPA project area (**Figure 1**).

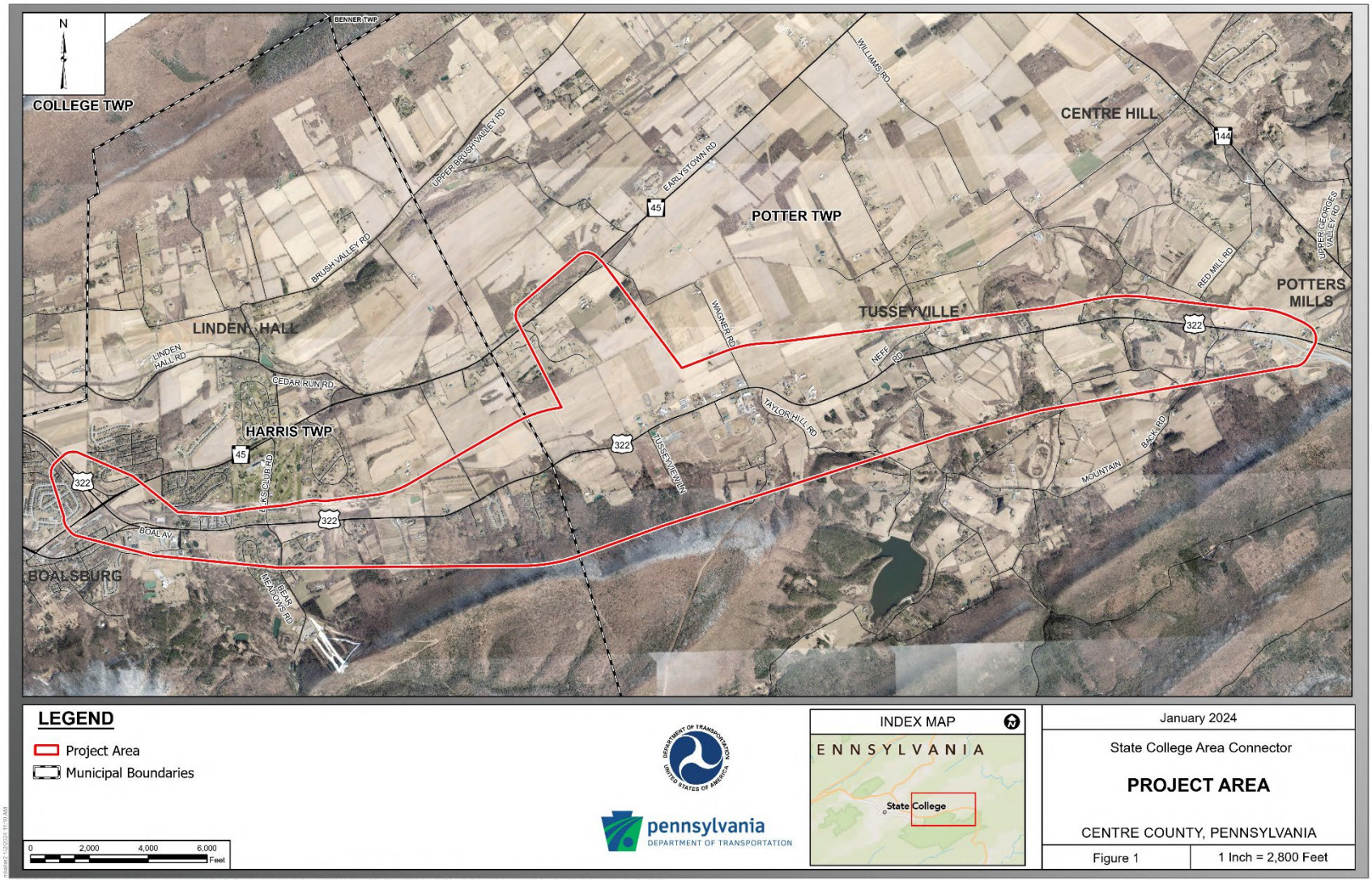
Subsequent to the PEL completion, additional traffic investigations and analysis and coordination with local officials for the State College Area Connector project determined that the connector road and interior interchange (included in each of the PEL US 322 Build Alternatives) would provide some localized improvements to PA 45. However, it was determined that the connector road and associated interchange was not necessary to address the project's purpose and need, nor did it address corridor wide issues along PA 45. As a result, the proposed interior interchange and local road connection was removed from this State College Area Connector project and will be considered in the independent PA 45 Corridor Improvements project, as appropriate. The State College Area Connector project will advance independently but will not preclude the inclusion of a future interior interchange and local road connection should the independent safety study along PA 45 determine that it would be beneficial in connection with other proposed PA 45 Corridor Improvements project. **Figure 2** provides the revised project area for the State College Area Connector project that will move forward for alternative development and investigation.

1.2. Project History

Within the State College Area Connector project area, there have been many transportation improvement studies and projects that have influenced travel within and immediately adjacent to the project area dating back to the 1970s. However, in the 1990s, key regional studies occurred which greatly influenced travel and development within the project area. The following provides a high-level summary of the local and regional transportation projects which have provided influence on the State College Area Connector project area.

Interstate 80

- I-80 was completed in Pennsylvania in 1970.
- I-80 through Pennsylvania influenced traffic patterns, particularly an increase in interstate truck traffic. This increase in traffic affected travel conditions within the project area.
- Roadway safety and quality of life in Centre County communities traversed by these roadways were influenced by the I-80 completion.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UPPER BRUSH VALLEY RD
EARLYSTOWN RD
WILLIAMS RD
WAGNER RD
RED MILL RD
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LINDEN HALL RD
CEDAR RUN RD
NEFF RD
TAYLOR HILL RD
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PARK CLUB RD
BOAL AV
BEAR MEADOWS RD
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LEGEND
Project Area
Municipal Boundaries
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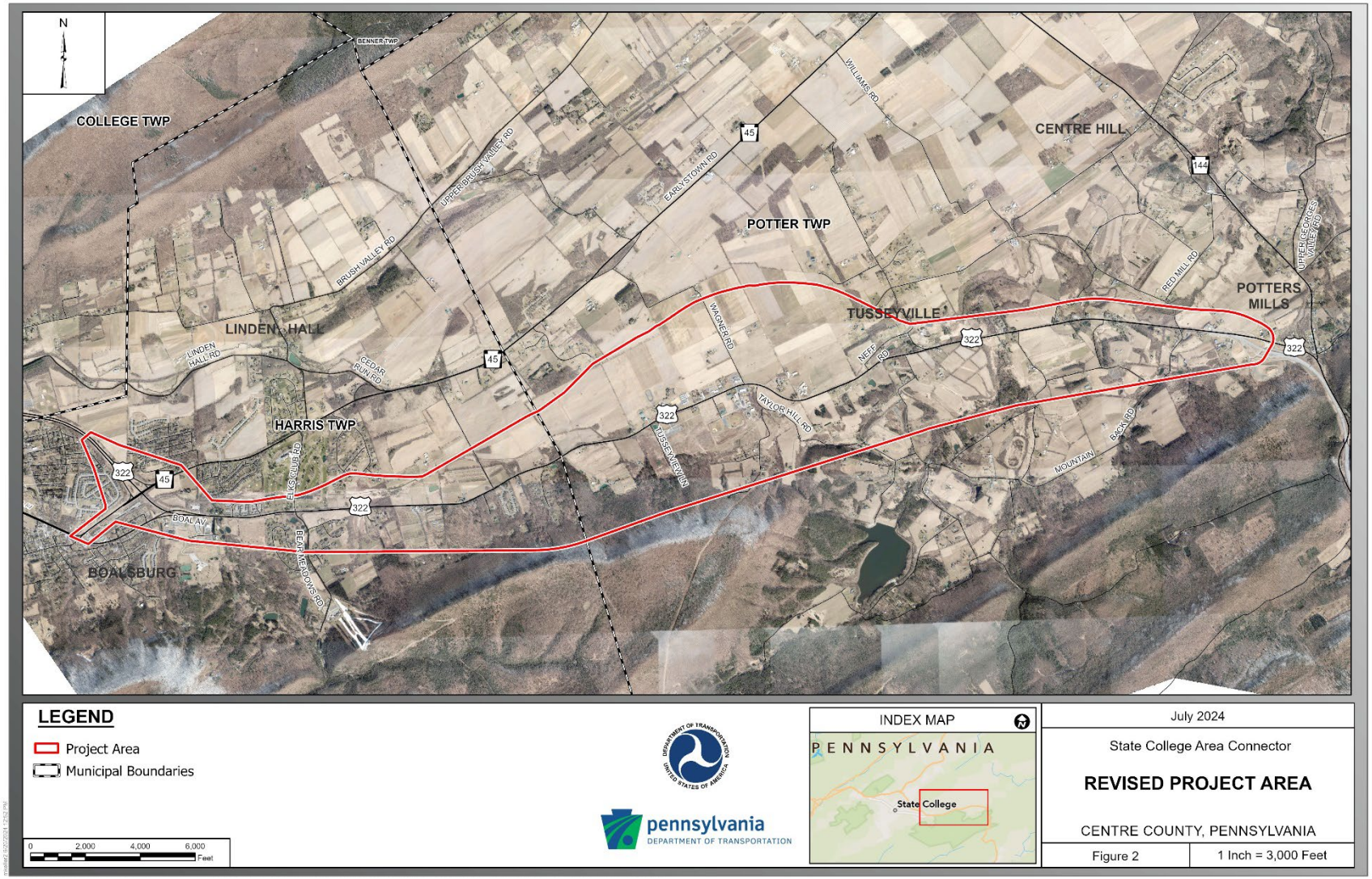
pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
INDEX MAP
PENNSYLVANIA
State College
January 2024
State College Area Connector
PROJECT AREA
CENTRE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA
Figure 1
1 Inch = 2,800 Feet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Project Area
Municipal Boundaries
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pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
INDEX MAP
PENNSYLVANIA
State College
July 2024
State College Area Connector
REVISED PROJECT AREA
CENTRE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA
Figure 2
1 Inch = 3,000 Feet

Interstate 99

- US 220 study west of the State College area led to the development of a major improvement project for a new north-south interstate through Centre County that culminated with the construction of I-99 extending from Blair County to US 322 (the Mount Nittany Expressway).
- PA 26 corridor study resulted in the construction of I-99 from US 322 (the Mount Nittany Expressway) north towards I-80.
- I-80 Exit 161 (Bellefonte Interchange) is under development to replace the existing interchange with a new high-speed interchange and complete the I-99/I-80 connection. Construction of the interchange improvements will complete the goal for a major north-south interstate (I-99) through the center of the Commonwealth connecting two major east-west interstates, the Pennsylvania Turnpike (I-76) and I-80.

South Central Centre County Transportation Study (SCCCTS)

- SCCCTS was initiated in 1998 to evaluate and address transportation needs along the US 322, PA 144, and PA 45 corridors. The SCCCTS project needs identified specific transportation problems in each of the three corridors and on the local road system, as well as needs associated with regional travel patterns. The regional travel pattern need statement addressed the high percentage of through trips (in particular the high volume of truck traffic), high crash rates (including fatalities), poor Level of Service (LOS) (including LOS associated with heavy truck traffic) and increases in travel demand associated with local and regional planned development. However, SCCCTS was terminated in 2004 due to funding shortfalls and the NOI rescinded on July 29, 2019.

Safety Improvements

- Following the termination of SCCCTS in 2004, short-term safety improvements along the US 322 corridor were conducted between 2006 and 2015. These improvements included general intersection improvements (e.g., turn lanes), safety improvements (e.g., safety dot warning pavement markings, removal of passing zones), minor roadway realignments, and bridge reconstruction. These improvements were initiated to address some of the safety concerns identified during the SCCCTS study.

Potters Mills Gap (PMG) Transportation Project

- PennDOT and FHWA initiated the PMG Transportation Project to improve a 3.75-mile-long section of US 322 in Potter Township within the area locally known as “Potters Mills Gap”. This project area encompassed the southeastern portion of the SCCCTS study area. It was determined that this project had independent utility and addressed a defined purpose and need. The project included the construction of a new limited access four-lane roadway section that started at the Sand Mountain Road intersection and extended west, tying back into existing US 322 with a new interchange and roundabout, west of the PA 144/US 322 intersection.

SCCCTS Data Refresh

- In 2018, PennDOT collected data to update the traffic and environmental information from the former SCCCTS (2004), to identify changes to travel patterns, the transportation network, and environmental conditions. This information supported the 2019 decision by state officials to restart efforts to address regional transportation needs in the US 322,

PA 44, and PA 45 area. Nearly, $15 million in state funding was allocated to advance the State College Area Connector Study.

State College Area Connector Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study

- In 2020, PennDOT, in cooperation with FHWA and coordination with the Centre County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), initiated the State College Area Connector PEL Study. The PEL process promoted early coordination with the public as well as federal, state, and local agencies in a transparent and collaborative environment that identified and evaluated transportation needs in the area and developed and evaluated alternatives while considering community concerns in transportation decision-making early in the planning process. The PEL study identified a range of alternatives and screened them against the purpose and need and potential for environmental effects. Three Build Alternatives corridors were recommended for further study. These three recommended Build Alternatives and a refined study area are being advanced for NEPA study with a Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS.

2. PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

2.1. Project Purpose

The purpose of this project is to improve roadway congestion by achieving acceptable LOS and to address safety issues by reducing the predicted crash frequency along the US 322 corridor between Potters Mills and Boalsburg. Additionally, the project will aim to provide a transportation network that meets driver expectations.

2.2. Project Need

Within the project area, there are transportation issues associated with high levels of congestion, potential safety issues along the roadway network, and a roadway network which presents a driver with changing roadway configurations. The following provides a summary of the needs statements and supporting documentation.

High peak hour traffic volumes cause congestion and result in unacceptable Level of Service (LOS) (LOS D [rural only], E, or F) on US 322 roadways and intersections.

- US 322 serves as the main travel route for local, regional, and interstate traffic, including trucks, within the project area. Currently during peak hours, US 322, between the US 322 Mount Nittany Expressway and the Mountain Back Road/Red Mill Road intersection (just west of Potters Mills), operates at a LOS D or E. The 2050 peak hour traffic volumes are anticipated to increase 41% which will increase congestion and worsen the LOS along the US 322 corridor. In 2050, LOS E is still anticipated for the entire US 322 corridor from the Mount Nittany Expressway to Potters Mills Gap, and travel speed will be further decreased with an average travel speed 15% less than the posted speed limit.
- Unsignalized intersections along US 322 are anticipated to operate at unacceptable LOS (LOS D, E, or F) due to high volumes of traffic along the uncontrolled main roadway which limit the availability of gaps in the traffic for making turning movements.
- US 322 averages three times more truck traffic within the project area in comparison to other similar roadways statewide, and truck traffic is expected to increase by 27% along

the corridor by 2050. The additional truck traffic increases overall congestion and contributes to unacceptable levels of service.

Existing roadway configurations and traffic conditions contribute to safety concerns in the project area.

- Crashes were identified along a majority of the US 322 corridor with some concentrations at unsignalized intersections (e.g., Elks Club Road/Bear Meadows Road, Neff Road, and Red Mill Road/Mountain Back Road). Additionally, between 2017 and 2021, nearly 19% of all crashes along US 322 were caused by a heavy vehicle.
- The Highway Safety Manual (HSM) analysis results indicate the potential for safety improvements along a majority of the US 322 corridor and at unsignalized intersections through the project area. Increasing traffic along US 322 has reduced the number of gaps available for side street and driveway traffic attempting to enter or exit US 322. This causes drivers to make turning movements outside of their comfort zone which contributes to crashes at side streets and driveway intersections. Additionally, the large percentage of through traffic exacerbates the issue as these drivers may be unfamiliar with the roadway characteristics.

The roadway network and configuration in the project area lacks continuity and does not meet driver expectations.

- US 322 is on the National Highway System and is classified as a principal arterial that is intended to provide long-distance connections. US 322, adjacent to the project area (near both Potters Mills and Boalsburg), is a four-lane, limited-access, divided highway facility with exit and entrance ramps to provide access to the local roadway network. This type of roadway is conducive to higher travel speeds and supports regional and interstate travel patterns. These adjacent sections of US 322 feed traffic into the project area, where US 322 is currently a two-lane, non-divided highway with unrestricted access to driveways and intersecting roadways. The abrupt change in roadway configuration and characteristics creates a roadway network that lacks continuity of facility type and function.
- Within the project area, US 322 serves local, regional, and interstate traffic (including truck and commuter traffic). The road also services other travel modes including farm equipment traffic and bicycle traffic. The change in the roadway cross-section at both ends of the corridor creates inconsistencies which may not meet driver expectations, particularly for regional and interstate traffic. The potential for additional uncontrolled access points along US 322 would continue to degrade roadway continuity along the corridor and create additional locations for conflicts that could result in crashes.

The complete Purpose and Needs Report is included in **Appendix A**.

3. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

3.1. Alternative Development and Screening History

The PEL study developed and screened a range of alternatives. The range of alternatives represented a wide variety of possible concepts for reducing congestion, improving safety, and addressing system continuity throughout the study area. Fundamental study goals that supported the purpose and need, local transportation and land use planning, transportation mobility, best engineering practices, and environmental stewardship were developed to aid in assessing the alternatives.

The range of alternatives were systematically screened based on their ability to meet the identified study purpose and need, minimize environmental effects, satisfy required engineering and constructability criteria, and address the study goals. The screening process consisted of two levels of screening. If during the screening any alternative was determined to not meet the purpose and need it was dismissed from further consideration. The *Alternatives Analysis and Screening Report for the State College Area Connector Planning and Environmental Linkages Study, Engineering Technical Memorandum for the State College Area Connector Planning and Environmental Linkages Study,* and *Traffic Analysis Technical Memorandum for the State College Area Connector Planning and Environmental Linkages Study*[1] provide the supporting analysis for the alternative development and screening process.

Level 1 Screening – The Level 1 Screening included a qualitative assessment to determine if the alternative met the study need. All the alternatives that were dismissed from further study were found to not meet the identified transportation needs. **Table 1** provides a summary of the alternatives dismissed and advanced for future study.

Table 1: Level 1 Screening Summary

Alternatives Advanced	Alternatives Dismissed
Upgrade Existing Alternative	No-Build Alternative
Build Alternative	Transit Alternative
	Transportation System Management (TSM) Alternative
	Transportation Control Measure (TCM) Alternative

[1] These technical memoranda are available on the project website at www.penndot.pa.gov/SCAC.

Level 2 Screening – The Level 2 screening level was divided into two parts: Level 2A and 2B.

Level 2A Screening – The Level 2A screening was conducted on the alternatives advanced from the Level 1 (**Table 1**). This screening was designed to qualitatively evaluate if the alternative would address the need to reduce traffic congestion on the local roadway network. Only the need to reduce congestion was evaluated during Level 2A. The need to improve safety and meet driver expectations were qualitatively confirmed during Level 1, so further evaluation of those topics was deferred until it was determined if an alternative could reduce traffic congestion. Two representative Build Alternative corridors, one along US 322 and one along PA 144, and an Upgrade Existing Alternative along US 322 were developed for Level 2A analysis.

The Level 2A Screening confirmed that both of the representative Build Alternative corridors and the Upgrade Existing Alternative along US 322 would reduce congestion. As a result, both alternatives were advanced for further development and evaluation in the Level 2B Screening.

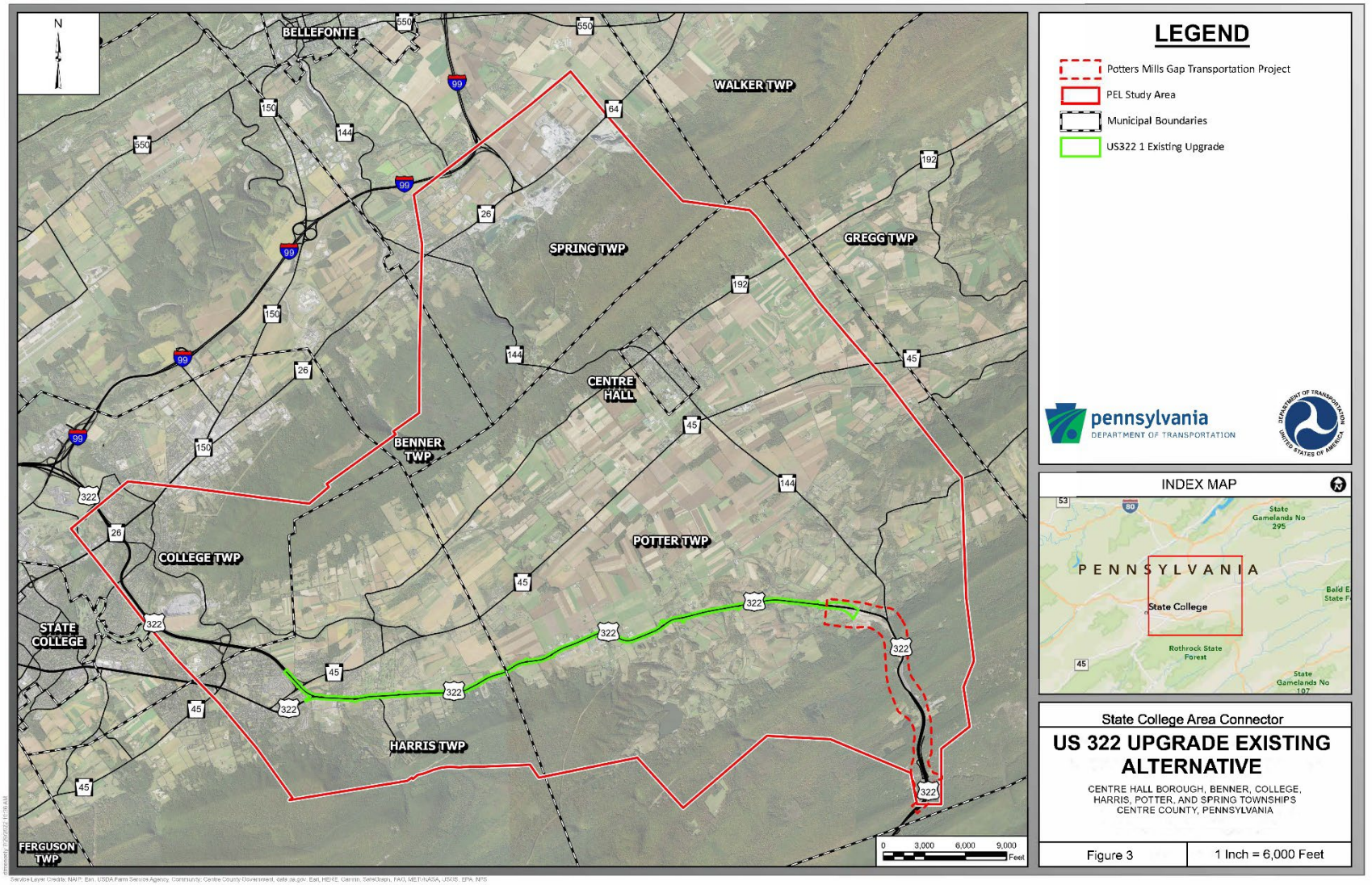
Level 2B Screening – The Level 2B Screening started with the identification and development of Build Alternative corridor options and refinement of the Upgrade Existing Alternative along US 322. Specifically, nine Build Alternative corridors options (five corridors parallel to US 322 and three corridors parallel to PA 144) and one Upgrade Existing Alternative along US 322 were developed as shown on **Figure 3** and **Figure 4**.

The goal of the Level 2B Screening was to determine which alternative and/or which Build Alternative corridor options best met the study purpose and need, while considering public, agency, and stakeholder input and minimizing potential effects on the natural and built environments. Traffic, environmental, engineering, and planning analyses were conducted to determine the potential effects or benefits of the alternative corridors for each of the disciplines. Public input obtained during the four public meetings and other coordination activities as documented in the meeting summary reports was included as part of the planning analysis.

The Level 2B Screening results indicated that US 322 Upgrade Existing Alternative would not improve safety and therefore would not meet the study needs. As a result, it was dismissed from further study.

When looking at the nine Build Alternative corridor options, the Level 2B Screening determined that all the corridor options would meet the identified purpose and need for the study. However, it was determined that US 322-2, US 322-3, US 322-4, PA 144-1, PA 144-2, and PA-144-3 Build Alternative corridors would have excessive environmental, engineering, and planning effects when compared to other alternatives and were dismissed from further study. **Table 2** provides an overview of the reasons for dismissing these corridors.

The Level 2B Screening confirmed that when balancing the overall traffic, environmental, engineering, and planning data and analyses, the US 322-1OEX, US 322-1S, and US 322-5 Build Alternative corridors would meet the purpose and needs and would best minimize natural, cultural, socio-economic effects, address planning concerns, and minimize engineering issues. They were identified as reasonable alternatives to be carried forward for evaluating in the NEPA phase of the transportation project development process.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Potters Mills Gap Transportation Project
PEL Study Area
Municipal Boundaries
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INDEX MAP
PENNSYLVANIA
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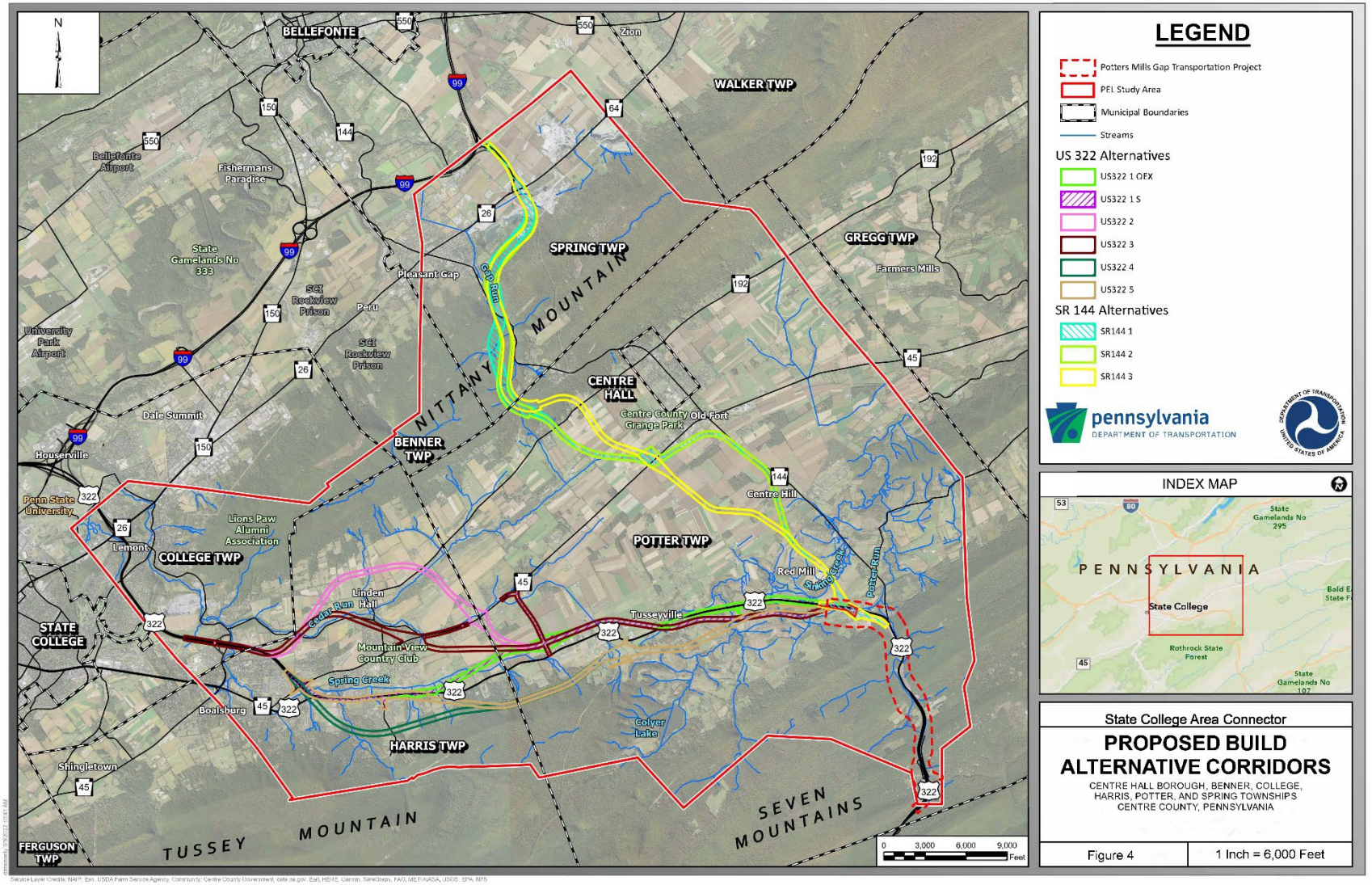
US 322 UPGRADE EXISTING ALTERNATIVE
CENTRE HALL BOROUGH, BENNER, COLLEGE, HARRIS, POTTER, AND SPRING TOWNSHIPS
CENTRE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA
Figure 3
1 Inch = 6,000 Feet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Cedar Run
NITTANY MOUNTAIN
University Park Airport
Dale Summit
Houserville
CENTRE HALL
Centre County Old Fort Grange Park
BENNER TWP
Centre Hill
Penn State University
Lions Paw Alumni Association
Lemont
COLLEGE TWP
POTTER TWP
Red Mill
Sinking Creek
Potter Run
Linden Hall
Tusseyville
STATE COLLEGE
Cedar Run
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US322 1 S
US322 2
US322 3
US322 4
US322 5
SR 144 Alternatives
SR144 1
SR144 2
SR144 3
pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
INDEX MAP
PENNSYLVANIA
State College
State Gamelands No 295
Rothrock State Forest
State Gamelands No 107
State College Area Connector
PROPOSED BUILD ALTERNATIVE CORRIDORS
CENTRE HALL BOROUGH, BENNER, COLLEGE, HARRIS, POTTER, AND SPRING TOWNSHIPS
CENTRE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA
Figure 4
1 Inch = 6,000 Feet

Table 2: Summary of Level 2B Dismissed Alternatives

Alternatives Dismissed	Reason for Dismissal
US 322 Upgrade Existing Alternative	• Failed to improve roadway safety • Failed to meet the purpose and needs
US 322-2 Build Alternative	• Dismissal reason based on the environmental, engineering, and planning analyses • Environmental Screening - higher potential effects to three of the five comparative environmental regulatory resources ○ most impactful to productive agricultural lands (361 acres) including Agricultural Security Areas (192 acres) and agricultural zoning (246 acres) which are subject to the Agricultural Lands Condemnation Approval Board (ALCAB) approval process ○ would have the potential to relocate 21 residential properties ○ would have the highest acreage effect on the Penns Valley/Brush Valley Rural Historic District (372 acres), a protected Section 4(f) resource • Planning Screening - extends away from the existing US 322 and current US 322 business district and potentially opens new areas for development that is not wanted locally as identified during outreach efforts and captured in summary reports • Engineering Screening - longest of the US 322 corridors with a higher comparative planning-level total cost estimate
US 322-3 Build Alternative	• Dismissal reason based on the environmental, engineering, and planning analyses • Environmental Screening – higher potential effects to three of the five comparative environmental regulatory resources ○ higher comparative effects on productive agricultural lands (313 acres) including Conservation Easements (39 acres) and agricultural zoning (212 acres) which are subject to the ALCAB approval process ○ highest number of potential residential relocations (29 homes) ○ higher comparative effects on the Penns Valley/Brush Valley Rural Historic District (331 acres), a protected Section 4(f) resource • Planning Screening - extends away from the existing US 322 and current US 322 business district and potentially opens new areas for development that is not wanted locally as identified during outreach efforts and captured in summary reports • Engineering Screening – second longest of the US 322 corridors with the highest comparative planning-level total cost estimate
US 322-4 Build Alternative	• Dismissal reason based on the environmental and planning analyses

Alternatives Dismissed	Reason for Dismissal
	• Environmental Screening – higher potential effects to three of the five comparative environmental regulatory resources ○ higher comparative effects on regulated Waters of the US including 6 acres of wetlands and 9,124 linear feet of Cold Water Fishes (CWF)-High Quality (HQ)/ CWF streams ○ displaces four commercial facilities ○ highest effect on the Rothrock State Forest (part) and Stone Mountain Important Bird area (125 acres) • Planning Screening – affects the only remaining industrially zoned land in Harris Township and displaces existing businesses with no potential to relocate locally. Effects a community facility, Harvest Fields, which raised substantial community concerns
PA 144-1 Build Alternative PA 144-2 Build Alternative	• Dismissal reason based on the environmental, engineering, and planning analyses • Environmental Screening – higher potential effects in all five of the comparative environmental regulatory resources ○ higher comparative effects on regulated Waters of the US including 6 to 7 acres of wetlands ○ effects129 to 130 acres of the public water supply well protection zone area for Centre Hall Borough and Potter Township ○ highest effect on bat swarming habitat (248 to 261 acres) and in proximity to two known bat caves ○ effects productive agricultural lands (294 to 296 acres) including Agricultural Security Areas (165 to 166 acres) and conservation easements (40 acres) which are subject to the ALCAB approval process ○ effects an historic resource • Planning Screening – effects the Centre Airpark and the public water supply protection zones • Engineering Screening – longest corridors with highest comparative planning-level total cost estimate
PA 144-3 Build Alternative	• Dismissal reason based on the environmental, engineering and planning analyses • Environmental Screening – higher potential effects in all five of the comparative environmental regulatory resources ○ highest comparative effects on regulated Waters of the US including 8 acres of wetlands ○ effects 103 acres of the public water supply well protection zone area for Centre Hall Borough and Potter Township ○ highest effect on the area bat swarming habitat (269 acres) and in proximity to two known bat caves ○ effects productive agricultural lands (268 acres) including Agricultural Security Areas (183 acres) and conservation

Alternatives Dismissed	Reason for Dismissal
	○ easements (37 acres) which are subject to the ALCAB approval process • Planning Screening – effects the Centre Airpark and the public water supply protection zones • Engineering Screening – longer corridor with a higher comparative planning-level total cost estimate

3.2. Alternatives Recommended for NEPA Study

Since the completion of the PEL study, additional Pre-NOI traffic investigations and analysis and coordination with local officials for the State College Area Connector project were conducted. The analysis determined that the connector road and interior interchange connecting to PA 45 would provide some localized improvements to PA 45. However, it was determined that its inclusion was not necessary to address the overall project's purpose and need, nor did it address corridor wide issues along PA 45. Therefore, any consideration of a new connection between PA 45 and US 322 would be better addressed as part of an independent PA 45 safety study. As a result, the proposed interior interchange and local road connection was removed from this State College Area Connector project and will be considered in the independent PA 45 Corridor Improvements project, as appropriate. As a result, the PEL alternatives (**Figure 5**) recommended to advance for NEPA study were refined and act as a starting point for detailed engineering alternative development in the EIS.

The following provides an overview of the revised PEL alternatives that were selected as both meeting the purpose and need and determined to be reasonable as a result of the PEL process. These alternatives will advance for further engineering and environmental study in the NEPA phase of the transportation project development process. These alternatives, along with the study area, are depicted in **Figure 5**. In addition, the No Build Alternative will be considered in the NEPA phase for baseline comparison.

Build Alternative - US 322-1S

The US 322-1S Build Alternative (US 322-1S) would have logical termini at the US 322 (Mt. Nittany Expressway) in Boalsburg and US 322 at Potters Mills Gap. US 322-1S would begin at the existing US 322 interchange with PA 45 near Boalsburg and follow existing US 322 to a point east of the Elks Club Road/Bear Meadows Road intersection. In this area, a two-lane service road would be provided on the north side of the limited access highway to provide connectivity to the local road network. US 322-1S would shift off existing US 322 to the north until it crosses south over US 322 near Neff Road in Tusseyville. The alternative would parallel US 322 to the south before connecting to the newly constructed US 322/PA 144 interchange at Potters Mills Gap. The Build Alternative US 322-1S would be 8.3 miles.

Build Alternative - US 322-1OEX

The US 322-1OEX Build Alternative (US 322-1OEX) is a hybrid of US 322-1S that attempts to maximize the use of the existing US 322 right-of-way. US 322-1OEX would have logical termini at

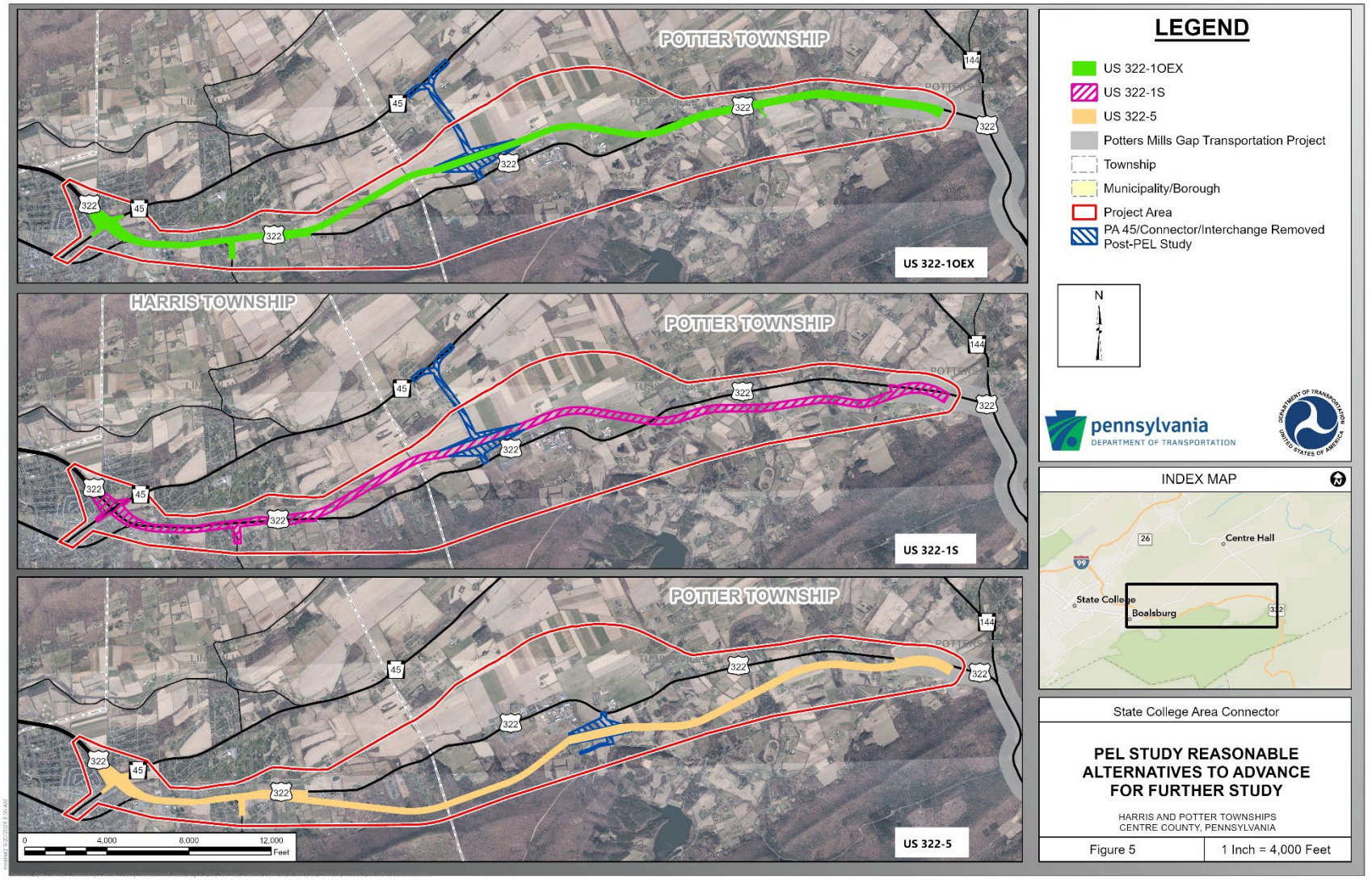
the US 322 (Mt. Nittany Expressway) in Boalsburg and US 322 at Potters Mills Gap. US 322-1OEX would begin at the existing US 322 interchange with PA 45 near Boalsburg and follow existing US 322 to a point east of the Elks Club Road/Bear Meadows Road intersection. In this area, a two-lane service road would be provided on the north side of the limited access highway to provide connectivity to the local road network. US 322-1OEX would shift off existing US 322 to the north until it crosses back to US 322 near Neff Road in Tusseyville. Near Neff Road, US 322-1OEX would follow existing US 322 to the newly constructed US 322/PA 144 interchange at Potters Mills Gap, with the inclusion of a two-lane service road to maintain local access for properties adjacent to the new limited access facility. US 322-1OEX would be 8.3 miles long.

Build Alternative - US 322-5

The US 322-5 Build Alternative (US 322- 5) would have logical termini at the US 322 (Mt. Nittany Expressway) in Boalsburg and US 322 at Potters Mills Gap. US 322-5 would begin at the existing US 322 interchange with PA 45 near Boalsburg and follow existing US 322 to a point east of the Elks Club Road/Bear Meadows Road intersection. A two-lane service road on the north side of the limited access highway would connect to the local road network. US 322-5 would turn southeast off existing US 332 corridor near Tait Road, and proceed east along the lower slope of Tussey Mountain, paralleling US 322. The corridor would continue paralleling US 322 to the south crossing over Church Hill Road, Dogtown Road, and Red Mill Road and connect to the newly constructed US 322/PA 144 interchange at Potters Mills Gap. US 322-5 would be 8.4 miles long.

No Build Alternative

The No Build Alternative involves taking no action, except routine maintenance and other small projects currently listed in the Centre County Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The existing two-lane alignment of US 322 between Potters Mills Gap and Boalsburg, Pennsylvania would remain. No new alignments or roadway improvements would be constructed.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Potters Mills Gap Transportation Project
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State College Area Connector
PEL STUDY REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES TO ADVANCE FOR FURTHER STUDY
HARRIS AND POTTER TOWNSHIPS
CENTRE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA
Figure 5
1 Inch = 4,000 Feet

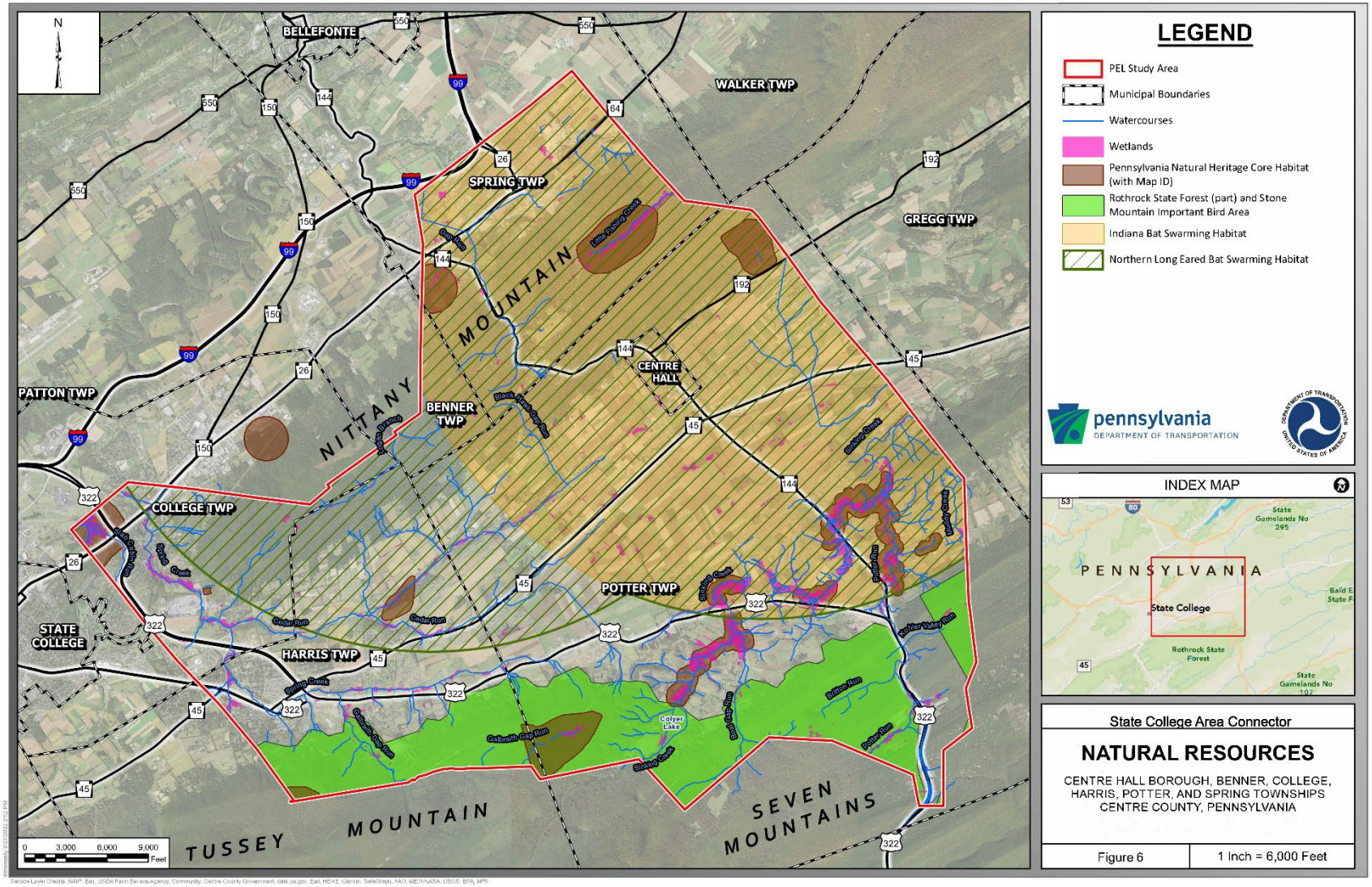
4. SUMMARY OF EXPECTED EFFECTS

During the PEL Study, environmental resources in the study area were identified by collecting publicly available web based existing maps and data; direct coordination with various federal, state, and local government agencies; select site reconnaissance; coordination with private organizations; and public input. These features were mapped using a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) database. **Figures 6, 7, and 8** identify environmental features used during the PEL Study to aid in the identification of reasonable alternatives to be carried forward for detailed study as part of the NEPA phase.

The following resources will be evaluated in the EIS and supporting technical studies:

- Cultural Resources
  - Archaeology
  - Historic Architecture
- Hazardous Materials
- Air Quality
- Noise-Sensitive Areas
- Natural Resources
  - Wildlife and Habitat
  - Threatened, Endangered, and Special Concern Species
  - Waters of the U.S.
  - Water Quality
  - Groundwater
  - Floodplains
- Farmlands
- Visual Resources
- Section 4(f)
  - Public Parks and Public Recreational Facilities
  - Historic Properties
  - State Game Lands
- Socioeconomics
  - Communities and Community Facilities
  - Population and Housing
  - Economic Resources
  - Land Use and Right-of-Way
  - Environmental Justice
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Climate Change
- Resiliency

Direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to these resources will be evaluated, as applicable. Effects are expected to these resources. This information is based on the analysis conducted during the PEL Study, which was publicly available and presented potential effects for the Build Alternative corridors (US 322-1OEX, US 322-1S, and US 322-5) identified to be carried forward for detailed study as part of the NEPA phase of project development. **Table 3** presents preliminary effects that are based on these collective efforts. These effects will continue to be refined as the supporting documentation is reviewed by PennDOT, FHWA, the Cooperating and Participating Agencies for the study, and the Draft EIS effects could be further refined. The final NEPA effect will be documented in the Final EIS/ Record of Decision (ROD).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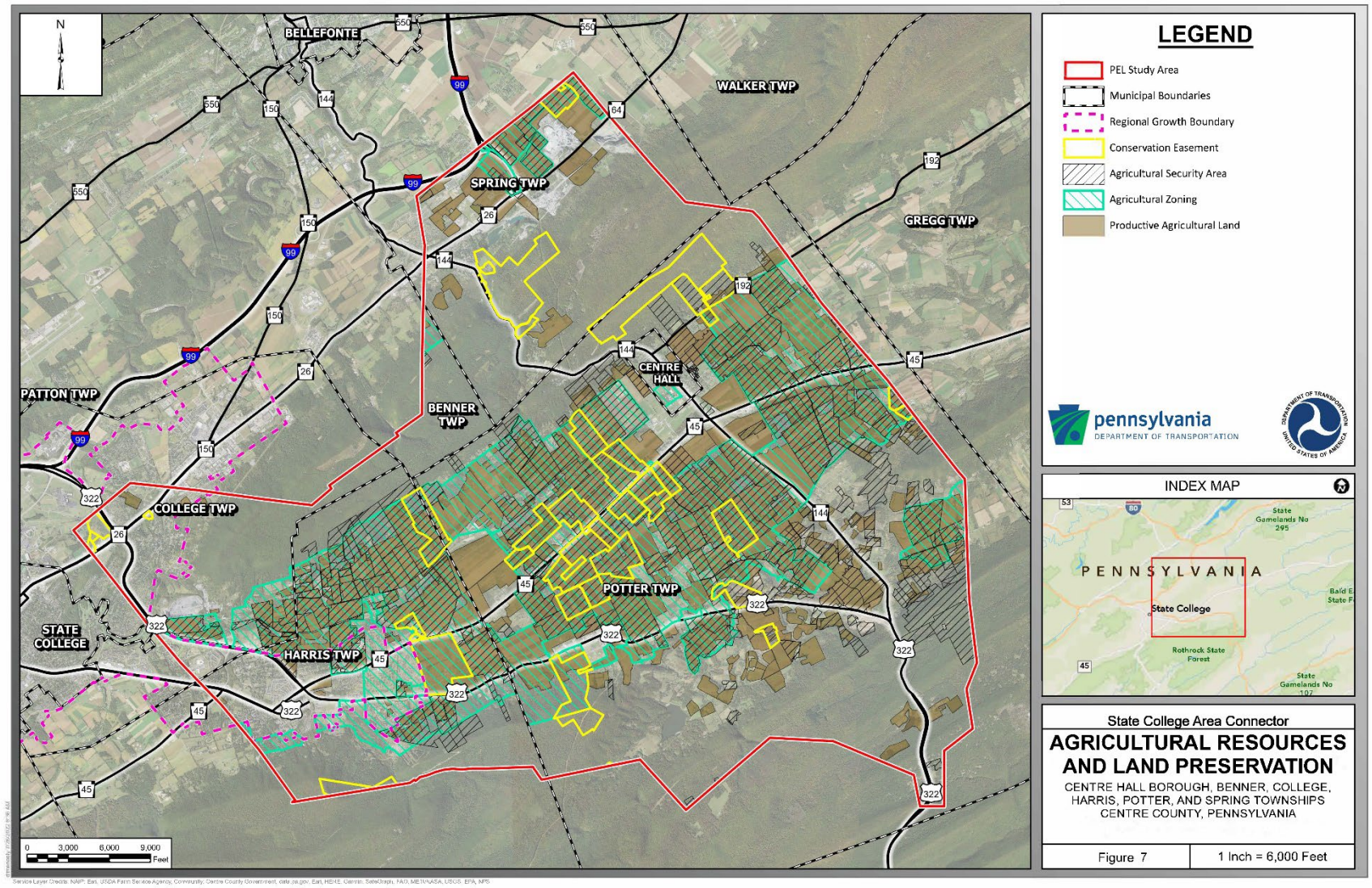
PEL Study Area
Municipal Boundaries
Watercourses
Wetlands
Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Core Habitat (with Map ID)
Rothrock State Forest (part) and Stone Mountain Important Bird Area
Indiana Bat Swarming Habitat
Northern Long Eared Bat Swarming Habitat
pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
INDEX MAP
PENNSYLVANIA
State College
Rothrock State Forest
State Gamelands No 295
State Gamelands No 107
State College Area Connector
NATURAL RESOURCES
CENTRE HALL BOROUGH, BENNER, COLLEGE, HARRIS, POTTER, AND SPRING TOWNSHIPS
CENTRE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA
Figure 6
1 Inch = 6,000 Feet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HARRIS TWP
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LEGEND
PEL Study Area
Municipal Boundaries
Regional Growth Boundary
Conservation Easement
Agricultural Security Area
Agricultural Zoning
Productive Agricultural Land
pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
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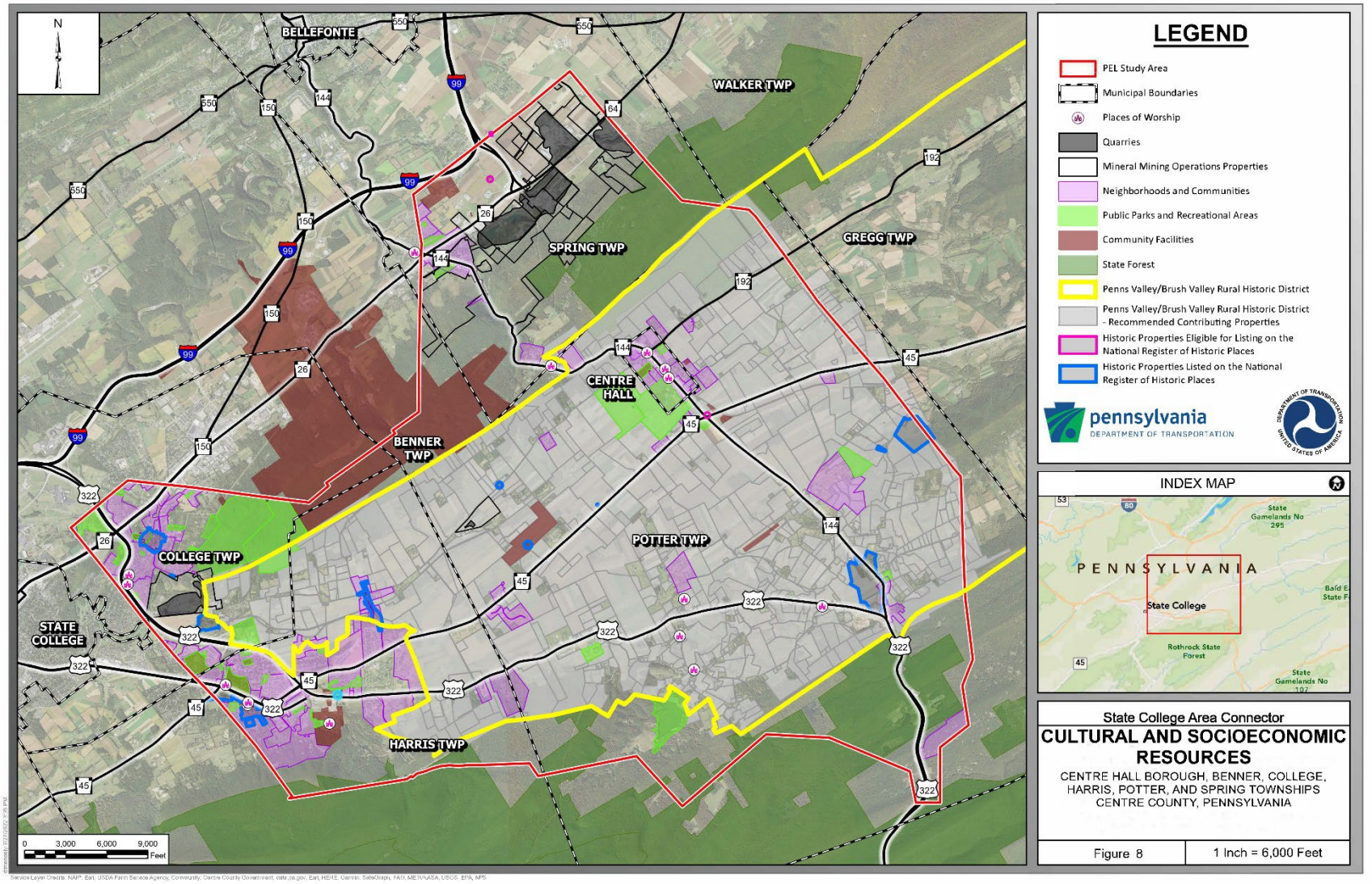
State College
State College Area Connector
AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES AND LAND PRESERVATION
CENTRE HALL BOROUGH, BENNER, COLLEGE, HARRIS, POTTER, AND SPRING TOWNSHIPS
CENTRE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA
Figure 7
1 Inch = 6,000 Feet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BENNER TWP
POTTER TWP
COLLEGE TWP
STATE COLLEGE
HARRIS TWP
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LEGEND
PEL Study Area
Municipal Boundaries
Places of Worship
Quarries
Mineral Mining Operations Properties
Neighborhoods and Communities
Public Parks and Recreational Areas
Community Facilities
State Forest
Penns Valley/Brush Valley Rural Historic District
Penns Valley/Brush Valley Rural Historic District - Recommended Contributing Properties
Historic Properties Eligible for Listing on the National Register of Historic Places
Historic Properties Listed on the National Register of Historic Places
pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
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PENNSYLVANIA
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State Gamelands No 295
Rothrock State Forest
State Gamelands No 107
State College Area Connector
CULTURAL AND SOCIOECONOMIC RESOURCES
CENTRE HALL BOROUGH, BENNER, COLLEGE, HARRIS, POTTER, AND SPRING TOWNSHIPS
CENTRE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA
Figure 8
1 Inch = 6,000 Feet

Table 3: Expected Preliminary Environmental Effects [1]

Regulatory Environmental Features		US 322-1 Existing (US 322-1 OEX)	US 322-1 South (US 322-1 S)	US 322-5
Natural Resources	Wetlands (acres)	4	3	8
	CWF-HQ/CWF Stream (linear feet)	5,129	6,681	9,046
	"Rothrock State Forest (part) & Stone Mountain" Important Bird Area (acres)	0	0	78
	PA Natural Heritage Core Habitat (acres)	25	11	15
	Bat Swarming Area (acres of forested land only)	15	7	7
	Productive Agricultural Land (acres)	251	278	181
	Conservation Easements (within Productive Agricultural Land, acres)	22	15	0
	Agricultural Security Areas (within Productive Agricultural Land, acres)	111	112	57
	Agricultural Zoning (within Productive Agricultural Land, acres)	152	160	97
Cultural Resources	National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) Listed/Eligible/Potentially Eligible Property (# involving historic structure displacements)	0	0	0
	Penns Valley/Brush Valley Rural Historic District Contributing Property (acres)	263	266	254
Socio-economic Resources	Public Parks (acres)	0	0	0.3
	Residential Displacements (# of resident units)	25	8	11
	Commercial Operations Displacements (# of operations) [2]	6	3	2
	Places of Worship Displacements (# of primary structures used for worship)	1	1	1
	Community Facilities (acres of property only)	2	2	2
Engineering	Alternative Length (miles)	8.3	8.3	8.4
	Area of Potential Disturbance (acres)	463	446	432

[1] Anticipated effect numbers generated from secondary sources.

[2] Includes only commercial enterprises that are not agricultural nor quarry/mineral mining operations.

Note: No Build is not expected to have any environmental effects, nor would it address the purpose and need for the project.

In addition to the expected preliminary environmental effects identified in **Table 3**, a preliminary environmental justice investigation was conducted to assess any potential effect on environmental justice communities. Demographic data was collected from the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) EJ Screen tool and the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year Estimates for all census block groups within the PEL study area. The analysis identified one Census Tract (CT) block group within the project area (CT 118 Block Group 3 15.2%) with a higher concentration of minority populations when compared to the County (12.4%). Coordination with local officials and field investigations identified one community within this CT block group which is likely home to minority populations. This community is adjacent to existing US 322 and was specifically avoided during development of the PEL alternatives. None of the CT block groups had concentrations of populations below poverty level greater than the County (18.2%) or the state (12.0%). As the alternatives are further engineered and refined, avoidance and minimization of effects to this community will be advanced to avoid a disproportionate and adverse effect to environmental justice populations. Continued coordination with local officials will be conducted during the development of the EIS studies, and targeted public outreach will be conducted with this community.

5. ANTICIPATED PERMITS AND STUDY SCHEDULE

Permits and authorizations anticipated for the project include a joint United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Section 404/ Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) Chapter 105 permit for wetland and stream effects. Section 106 consultation with the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs), and other consulting parties will also be required, in addition to Section 4(f) concurrences from appropriate officials with jurisdiction. Moreover, Section 7 Endangered Species Act consultation with USFWS and the preparation of an Informal Biological Assessment is anticipated.

The schedule for permit and approval processes required by NEPA regulations are provided in **Table 4.** The timetable is based on assumptions of the level of effort for various tasks within the overall study, as well as preliminary coordination with the permitting agencies on the required permits and approvals. This schedule will be captured on the FHWA Permitting Dashboard website (https://www.permits.performance.gov/) and updated as the project develops.

Table 4: Milestone Permit Timetable

Milestone	Proposed Schedule
Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act	
Initiate Consultation	June 2023 (completed)
Reconnaissance Survey	July 2023 (completed)
Eligibility Report	April 2024
Determination of Effects Report	December 2024
Conclude Consultation	December 2024
Agency Scoping Meeting	June 2023 (completed)
Agency Milestone Permit Timetable Acknowledgement	April 2024 (completed)
Public Scoping Meeting	August 2024
Issuance of Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement	July 2024
Threatened and Endangered Species Coordination with USFWS	November 2023 – September 2025
Public Meeting on Detailed Alternatives	February 2025
Submit USACE Section 404 Permit Application	June 2025
USACE Permit Completeness Determination	15 days from receipt of application
USACE Permit Public Notice	15 days from application completed date
Draft EIS Notice of Availability	July 2025
Joint NEPA Draft EIS/Section 404 Public Hearing	August 2025
USACE Issues Provisional Permit	October/November 2025
Individual Section 4(f) authorization	April 2026
Final EIS/Record of Decision	July 2026
PA DEP Issues Section 401 Water Quality Certification (WQC)	August 2026
USACE Issues Initial Proffered Permit	30 days after completion of the 401 WQC (a)(2) process
USACE Issues Final Proffered Permit	Within 15 days of PennDOT agreeing to the terms and conditions of the Initial Proffered Permit
PA DEP Issues Chapter 105 Standard Permit	May 2028

6. SCOPING AND PUBLIC/AGENCY REVIEW

PennDOT conducted public and agency outreach activities during the PEL Study for the State College Area Connector to present information and collect input. The PEL Study had a Public and Agency Coordination Plan which provided the foundation for the outreach activities.

PennDOT has conducted agency coordination to inform the purpose and need and preliminary project alternatives, scoping meeting, and other elements outlined in this document. The Agency Coordination Plan (**Appendix B**) was reviewed and agreed to by the Pennsylvania resource

agencies including the Cooperating and Participating agencies. It is a living document that will be updated through the EIS process.

The resource agency meetings in Pennsylvania are referred to as Agency Coordination Meetings (ACM). Since PennDOT is the lead agency for this project, the agency meetings are typically held on the ACM's regularly scheduled meeting dates. **Table 5** provides an overview of the PEL meeting or field view dates and information presented as well as the pre-NEPA/EIS meeting dates.

Table 5: Agency Coordination Meeting Summary

Date	Topic Discussed
February 26, 2020	Introduce PEL Study
July 22, 2020	PEL Study Process Environmental Features Purpose and Need Coordination Plan Agency Participation
November 6, 2020	Study Update Coordination Plan Comments Consensus Process Concurrence Process PEL Process and Schedule
December 9, 2020	Study update Purpose and Need Cooperating and Participating Agency Status Draft Coordination Plan and Consensus Virtual Public Meeting Overview Environmental Features
May 26, 2021	Environmental Overview Range of Alternatives Alternative Screening Process Methodology
August 25, 2021	PEL Process Recap Environmental WebMap and Technical Memos Range of Alternatives Alternatives Screening Other Potential Future Project Concepts Public Engagement Next steps
December 8, 2021	September Public Meeting Summary Environmental Data Update Technical Memos Update Build Alternative Update Revised Agency Coordination Plan Schedule
March 23, 2022	September Public Meeting Overview Environmental Mapping Updates Traffic Updates Build Alternative Updates Next Steps

Date	Topic Discussed
May 25, 2022	April 2022 Public Meeting Summary Range of Alternatives and Alternative Screening Process Alternatives Review PEL Process Next Steps
July 19, 2022	Alternative Review Preliminary Recommendation for Alternatives to advance in NEPA Environmental concerns Potential Mitigation Concepts
August 1, 2022	Alternative Review Preliminary Recommendation for Alternatives to advance in NEPA Environmental concerns Potential Mitigation Concepts
August 24, 2022	Alternative Screening Process Environmental Resources Potential Effects and Comparative Analysis Traffic, Engineering and Planning Comparative Analysis Next Steps
February 22, 2023	October 2022 Public Meeting Summary Draft PEL Report Build Alternative option recommendations to advance in NEPA
June 28, 2023	Final PEL results EIS Scoping Environmental Methodologies
January 24, 2024	EIS Purpose and Need Draft Agency Coordination Plan

Additionally, PennDOT conducted four public open house meetings. These meetings solicited public comment on the presented information which included:

- Virtual Open House Meeting – October 2020
  - overview of the transportation development process
  - PEL Study process
  - environmental resources
  - engineering and traffic data
  - purpose and study need
- Open House Public Meeting – September 21 and 22, 2021
  - PEL Study process
  - range of alternative concepts
  - Upgrade Existing and Build Alternative corridor concepts
  - alternative screening process
  - preliminary environmental and traffic analysis
- Open House Public Meeting – April 5 and 6, 2022
  - environmental data collection efforts
  - traffic analyses
  - Upgrade Existing and Build Alternative corridor refinements

  - key resource and alternative modifications since September 2021 meetings
- Open House Public Meeting – October 19 and 20, 2022
  - PEL Study Report draft recommendations for alternatives to move forward
  - potential environmental and traffic benefits/burdens

In addition, public official kick-off meetings were held in August, September, and November 2020 (Harris Township/August 10, Centre Hall Borough/August 13, Potter Township/August 17, College Township/August 20, Benner Township/September 3, Spring Township/September 8, Centre County/November 24, 2020). These meetings introduced the data presented in the Virtual Open House Meeting.

Combined public official meetings were also held:

- August 31, 2021, in advance of the September 2021 open house meeting
- March 30, 2022, in advance of the of the April 2022 open house meeting
- September 7, 2022, in advance of the October 2022 open house meetings

Each of these meetings presented the boards and documents used at the corresponding public open house meeting.

FHWA and PennDOT are continuing the scoping process and formally beginning the EIS development process with the publication of the NOI. In preparation for the issuance of the NOI, PennDOT has made updates to the project website (penndot.pa.gov/SCAC) to direct the public to the Final State College Area Connector Planning and Environmental Linkages Report and associated scoping documents. Additionally, PennDOT will continue to conduct targeted outreach to communities in and around the study area.

Outreach will include traditional public meetings and hearings, public official coordination, and stakeholder outreach/interviews as appropriate. Notification to these events will include newspaper advertising, social media posts, email invitations, mail carrier delivered notifications (e.g., Every Door Direct Service or letter invitation), and community flyer postings, as appropriate.

Public outreach that focuses on the environmental justice and underserved populations (e.g., Plain Sect Community/Amish) will be conducted by posting flyers in locations that are frequented by these communities and using Every Door Direct mailing for the zip codes within the project area. To reach the Plain Sect/Amish community, letter invitations with flyers will be sent to the three church district bishops that include and are adjacent to the project area.

A 30-day public comment period is being held in association with the publication of the NOI in the Federal Register. There will be at least three more public involvement opportunities for the State College Area Connector Project. During project Scoping, there will be two public open house meetings. The first Scoping public open house meeting will occur after the NOI is issued and will present detailed traffic analysis, updated environmental features, and preliminary engineering alignment alternatives. The second Scoping public open house meeting will be held following alternative refinement and identification of a draft recommended preferred alternative. This public

open house meeting will also present potential environmental effects and conceptual mitigation. Lastly, following the issuance of the Notice of Availability of the Draft EIS, a public hearing with an option for multiple nights, if necessary, will be held. Refer to the Coordination Plan for Public Involvement for more information (**Appendix C**).

The following public involvement materials are available on the study website (www.PennDOT.pa.gov/SCAC) to support the NOI:

- *State College Area Connector Planning and Environmental Linkages Report*
- *Virtual Public Meeting Summary Report for the State College Area Connector Planning and Environmental Linkage Report*
- *Open House Public Meeting Summary Report for the State College Area Connector Planning and Environmental Linkages Report - September 2021*
- *Open House Public Meeting Summary Report for the State College Area Connector Planning and Environmental Linkages Report – April 2022*
- *October 2022 Open House Public Meeting Summary Report for the State College Area Connector Planning and Environmental Linkages Report*

7. REQUEST FOR IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVES, INFORMATION, AND ANALYSES

Through the publication of the NOI, FHWA is solicitating comments from agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the public regarding potential alternatives, information on resources to analyze, analysis methods, and potential environmental effects from the Proposed Action for inclusion in the EIS. Interested parties are invited to submit comments by any of the following methods: Website: For access to the documents, go to the Federal eRulemaking Portal located at http://www.regulations.gov or the project website located at penndot.pa.gov/SCAC.

Follow the online instructions for submitting comments.

Mailing address or for hand delivery or courier: Federal Highway Administration, 30 North Third Street, Suite 700, Harrisburg PA, 17101

Email address: Julia.Moore@dot.gov

All submissions should include the agency name and the docket number that appears in the heading of this Notice. All comments received will be posted without change to http://www.regulations.gov, including any personal information provided. A summary of the comments received will be included in the Draft EIS.

8. CONTACT INFORMATION

FHWA: Julia Moore, Senior Environmental Specialist, Federal Highway Administration, Pennsylvania Division, 30 North Third Street, Suite 700, Harrisburg PA, 17101; email Julia.Moore@dot.gov; 717-221-4585.

Pennsylvania Department of Transportation: Eric Murnyack, PE, Project Manager, 70 PennDOT Drive, Clearfield, PA, 16830; email emurnyack@pa.gov; 814-765-0435.

APPENDIX A – PURPOSE AND NEED REPORT

APPENDIX B – COORDINATION PLAN FOR AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

APPENDIX C – COORDINATION PLAN FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT