

# TRANSPORTATION BACKGROUND AND TRENDS



## MONTCO

### A Comprehensive Plan for a Changing World

People and Population

Existing Land Use

**Transportation**

Preservation and Recreation

Environmental Systems

Infrastructure and Utilities

Economic Development

Housing

Health

Government and Community  
Facilities

Accelerating technological changes and disruptions to traditional commutes caused by the Covid-19 pandemic have resulted in unpredictable and still evolving transportation network usage in Montgomery County. Uncertainty about future changes affects how we plan our communities and provide for their transportation needs.

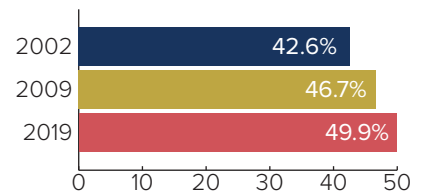
### COMMUTING PATTERNS

Commutes for Montgomery County residents were growing in distance during the early twenty-first century, reflecting the trends of the time when employment was still largely focused on in-person work in major job centers, and housing was generally more affordable further away from Philadelphia.

Beginning as a result of the Covid-19 global pandemic in 2020, the availability of remote work has resulted in dramatic changes to transportation network usage in Montgomery County and around the world, with peak travel volumes distributed over more hours and increases in midday and evening vehicle trips. Most offices in the Philadelphia area now have between 25 percent and 50 percent worker occupancy on an average weekday.

### Commuters Traveling More Than 10 Miles

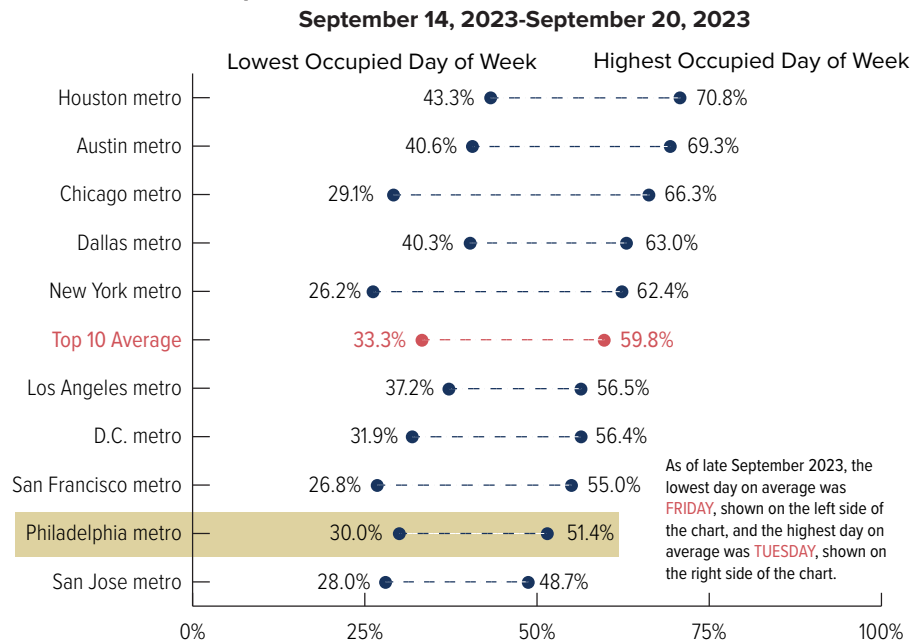
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, On the Map



Even with the increased levels of telecommuting, Philadelphia's roadway traffic has remained problematic, with the city experiencing the fourth highest level of congestion in the United States in 2022.

### Ten-City Daily Analysis of Office Occupancy

Source: [www.kastle.com/kastlesafespaces/](http://www.kastle.com/kastlesafespaces/)



## TRAFFIC VOLUMES

Most major county roadway traffic counts peaked prior to the Great Recession of 2007–2009 and have not handled the same daily volumes since. Traffic volumes have been generally flat since 2015.

## TRAVEL TIME DISPARITIES

Most Montgomery County residents and workers use their own cars to get around each day. For those without access to a car, the alternatives include transit, biking, and walking. Approximately 77 percent of Montgomery County municipalities have transit service from SEPTA or PART within their borders, allowing residents and visitors travel choices. However, while a car can make a trip from Norristown to Collegetown in 20 minutes, the travel time on transit is close to double with service only once per hour. According to a recent DVRPC study, the challenges for low-income residents to access transit range from cracked sidewalks, inadequate street lighting, and even elevation changes between their home and a transit route. Additionally, transit service reliability is an ongoing issue and can mean the difference between predictable commutes and missed engagements. The county continues to promote investment in infrastructure allowing for more transportation choices, especially in lower-income communities, with the goal of providing smoother travel in whatever mode of transportation a person selects.

## BICYCLES AND FREIGHT

The county's complete streets policy promotes safe access for all users of a roadway, including motor vehicles (especially emergency vehicles), bicycles, transit, and pedestrians. The county encourages safe bicycle infrastructure to be installed wherever possible, as per the *Bike Montco: The Bicycle Plan for Montgomery County* planned network or by municipalities looking to create bicycle-friendly conditions on streets they own. Bicycle travel volumes on roadways and trails were increasing even before the pandemic, and continue to grow, as county residents and visitors continue to seek a more active and environmentally sustainable lifestyle.

The increased development of major warehouses has drawn attention to truck and tractor-trailer travel throughout the county. While

### Traffic Volume Over Time

Source: DVRPC

	2005-2007	2010	2014-2016
I-76 (Schuylkill Expressway) between Hollow Rd & Belmont Ave	129,425	112,212	118,654
I-476 (NE Extension) between Balligomingo Rd & Front St	128,198	113,173	112,965
US 422 between PA 363 & Schuylkill River Bridge	89,152	74,444	78,189
PA 100 between Rick Rd & Grosser Rd	24,216	19,074	21,415
I-476 (NE Extension) between I-276 (PA Turnpike) & Hickory Rd	66,645	62,422	59,073
PA 309 near PA 152 (Easton Road)	38,459	33,201	44,251
I-276 (PA Turnpike) between Stenton Ave & Joshua Rd	130,080	114,675	127,535

### The number of daily on-road bicyclists along Susquehanna Road in Abington Township from Cumberland Rd to Arbuta Rd increased tenfold over 5 years

Source: DVRPC Bicycle Counts



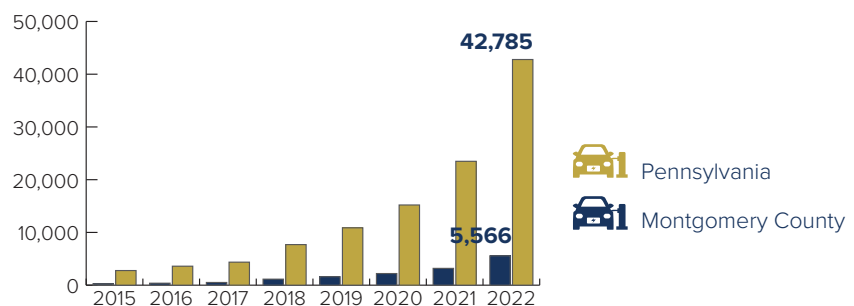
the county is not under as much pressure to cede development areas to warehouses as in the Lehigh Valley or the New Jersey Turnpike corridor, some larger-scale warehouses have been constructed or proposed along the Northeast Extension and US 422 corridors. E-commerce usage and growth accelerated during the pandemic but it remains unclear how delivery logistics will evolve as in-person shopping becomes viable again. It is likely that the convenience of home deliveries will continue to encourage the growth of warehousing across the region.

## ELECTRIC VEHICLE USAGE

Montgomery County is at the forefront of a trend toward increased electrification of motor vehicles. The county has one of the highest adoption rates of electric car ownership in Pennsylvania, and hundreds of public vehicle charging stations already have been installed around the county. Federal and state grant programs to install additional charging infrastructure will continue to support the transition of the county's vehicle fleet to an electric-powered fleet.

### Electric Vehicle Ownership in Pennsylvania and Montgomery County

Source: PennDOT





SEPTA 132 Bus, Souderton Borough

## TRANSIT

Public transportation in Montgomery County, as provided by SEPTA and Pottstown Area Rapid Transit (PART), faces difficult challenges. While traffic volumes on certain roadways in the county are close to their pre-pandemic levels, transit ridership remains substantially lower than pre-pandemic levels, especially for regional rail services connecting the county with Center City Philadelphia.

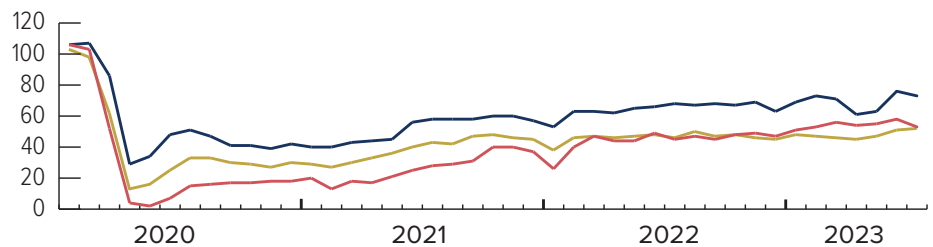
By December 2022, ridership on SEPTA's 38 county bus routes recovered to 61 percent of 2019 levels (similar to the 63 percent figure for the entire system at that time), while individual routes ranged anywhere from 33 percent to 78 percent. Regional Rail routes and the Norristown High-Speed Line (part of Metro) have even lower passenger counts, reaching only about half of pre-pandemic levels.

Remote work, competition from ridesharing services, passenger safety fears, and the unpredictability of service due to a shortage of operators continues to negatively impact public transit usage.

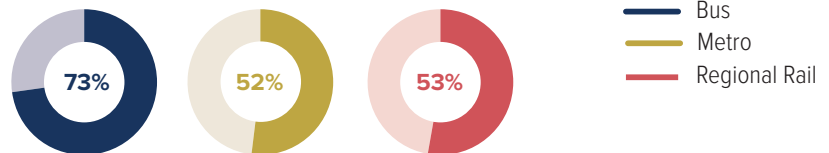
SEPTA's *Bus Revolution* and *Reimagining Regional Rail* projects are ongoing efforts to remake the system to provide more frequent service in areas with high transit demand. Both initiatives will take years and millions of dollars to fully realize, but they have the potential to go beyond traditional weekday work commuters to serve more county citizens.

### SEPTA Systemwide Post-Pandemic Ridership Recovery

Source: <https://data.septa.org/>



Data current as of July 2023



## CAPITAL PROJECTS

Multiple challenging factors impact infrastructure improvements for Montgomery County's transportation network, resulting in less overall investment per capita over time.

- Reductions in gas consumption, both from fewer miles traveled and rising use of electric vehicles, means fewer gasoline taxes collected that are available to municipalities for maintenance or the state for funding capital projects.
- Inflation increases costs for raw materials and labor for transportation projects already under construction or in the regional funding pipeline above what was originally expected.

- A shift in emphasis toward safety and repair projects at the regional level means more dollars are spent on the rehabilitation of roads, bridges, and transit structures than on the construction of new or improved facilities.

While major expansions to roadway capacity are being achieved during the mid-2020s (such as the widening of US Route 202 in the central part of the county and the construction of the PA Route 309 Connector in the Indian Valley region), these projects have long been planned and engineered. The expectation is that future construction projects will focus on operational improvements to arterials as well as preservation of the existing road network.

## SAFETY

Despite improvements in vehicle safety features, road design, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, and traffic signs, the number of fatal crashes remains fairly consistent, peaking in 2018 with 50 deaths across Montgomery County.

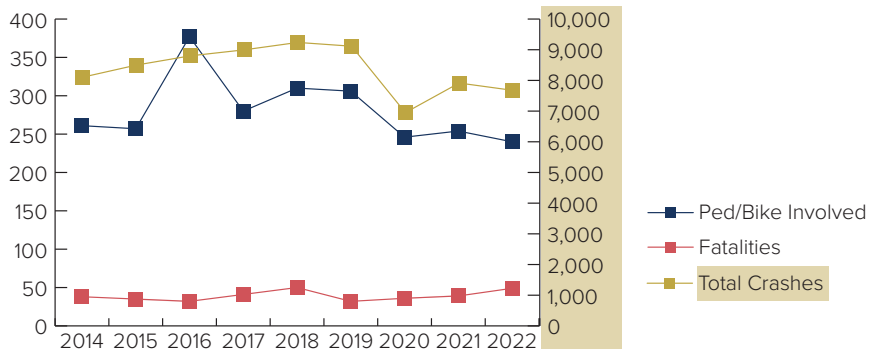
The traffic pattern changes during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in a significant decrease in the number of vehicle crashes around the county, but the number of crashes involving fatalities or serious injuries actually increased over 2019 levels. Most of the county's vehicle crashes are concentrated along principal arterials, such as Ridge Pike, PA-63, PA-463 and PA-611, and on major highways such as the Pennsylvania Turnpike (I-276), the Schuylkill Expressway (I-76), and US-422.

## CONSIDERATIONS

As the world recalibrates after the Covid-19 pandemic, some of the most impactful changes to our daily lives center around the use of transportation. A variety of transportation choices will continue to be important for residents and visitors. We will continue to monitor data to understand the evolving transportation world.

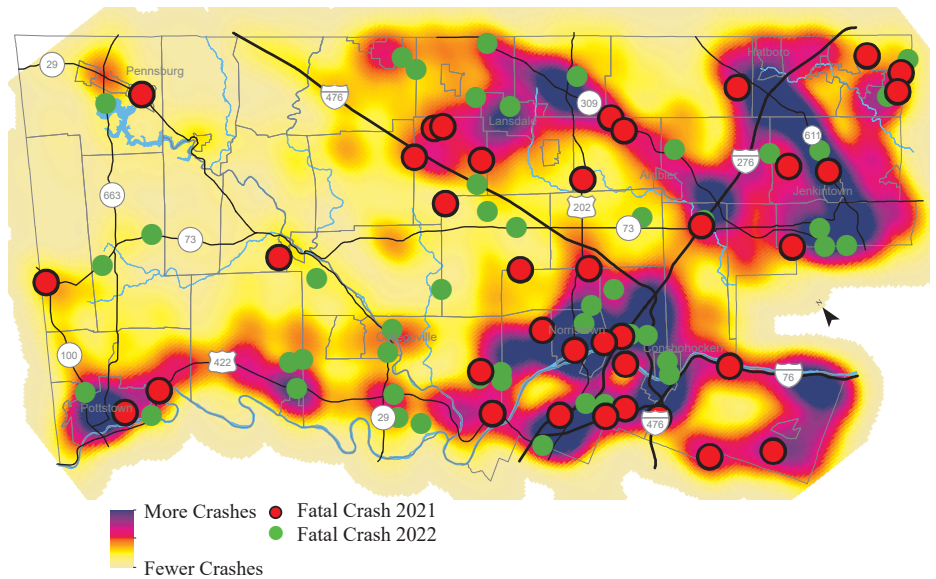
### Total Vehicular Crashes Versus Pedestrian- and Bicycle-Involved Crashes

Source: PennDOT



### Vehicular Crashes, 2021–2022

Source: PennDOT, 2022



Montgomery County government departments and boards play a role in furthering the county's comprehensive planning work. The Roads & Bridges Division, part of the Department of Assets and Infrastructure, maintains 131 county-owned bridges and more than 75 miles of county-owned roads. Updates on ongoing and completed projects can be found at <https://www.montgomerycountypa.gov/4177/Ongoing-Completed-Projects>.



Additional maps and data are available at:  
<https://montco-2050-1-montcopa.hub.arcgis.com>



Prepared by:  
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