Observations and Suggestions for accommodating bicyclists in N. Cornwall Township (updated Feb., 2011)

- All of the roadways in N. Cornwall Township are traveled by bicyclists. It depends upon where the cyclist lives and where he is going as to which roads he will need to use.

- Cyclists who do not live in N. Cornwall Township ride to, from, and through N. Cornwall when traveling by bike. Once again, it depends upon the cyclist’s destination/s as to which roadways will be taken.

- Based on the above information, the Bike Transportation Map that designates major cycling roads should not be viewed as the only roads used for bicycling.

- Two of Lebanon County’s Scenic Bike Rides pass through N. Cornwall Township: these are “Farmland Preservation Loop” and “Coleman Legacy”. A copy of this map is provided.

- Bicyclists utilize state and municipal roads in Lebanon County/N. Cornwall Township for transportation, fitness and recreation.

- Bicycle clubs and bicycling fundraisers use these roadways as well for group rides.

- It is greatly appreciated that N. Cornwall Township recognizes the need to accommodate bicyclists. If major improvements in the roadways are accomplished but end noticeably at N. Cornwall’s boundaries, it may spur neighboring municipalities to undertake these same accommodations.

Example: Rocherty Road has considerable traffic in N. Cornwall Township. Shoulders are minimal. However, the worst section of this roadway (becomes Evergreen) commences just beyond Lincoln to State/ SR897. There is no shoulder and it becomes steep. This is S. Lebanon’s portion. Bicyclists travel the length of this roadway regardless of which municipality the road is located in and what its names are.

- Bike paths located parallel but separate from the roadway will be dangerous due to the need to stop at intersecting roads; cyclists can not maintain speed if casual cyclists, walkers, joggers, children, pets are using the same pathways. Moving from a separate bike path to a roadway can be hazardous and time consuming. The cost of constructing and maintaining these paths are considerable. Snow, ice, wet leaves have to be removed. Local maintenance crews have been observed sweeping acorns off a Florida path. Preventing a gradual loss of asphalt surface due to vegetation growth is critical. AASHTO national standards for bike path construction should be required.

- Of critical importance is that bicycles are legal vehicles, and bicyclists have the right to travel on every roadway in Pennsylvania except designated limited access roads, PA Turnpike, I-81 as two examples.
Many motorists do not know that bikes/cyclists are allowed on roadways, and some will shout at them, even bully them with “close calls”. When there is a bike path or trail nearby, some will holler “get on the trail”. “Get on the sidewalk.”

LVBC recognizes that bike paths and trails provide pleasant experiences for some cyclists and especially families with young children, but they should not be viewed as a panacea for bicycling as a mode of transportation.

LVBC recognizes that in urban and commercial corridors/areas, bike paths or designated bike lanes may be needed. Sharrows road markings may be the only facility that will “fit” in a specific roadway situation.

If the Township is expected to develop a master plan for greenways and trails, we recommend that these pathways serve as connectors to the roadways. The recent expansion of LVRT into the city of Lebanon does enable cyclists to avoid traffic on SR72 to reach the Municipal Building, attend church or go to the other destinations in Lebanon. There remain the same issues that were noted earlier – mixed users and the danger of crashes between cyclists and cyclists and pedestrians.

A wide travel lane that can accommodate a vehicle and bicycle works very well for cyclists. There is a negative factor that should be considered: motorists tend to drive faster when lanes are wide. One of PennDOT’s recommendations is to “diet” some roads in order to have motorists drive more slowly and obey designated speed limits.

Shoulders serve bicyclists well if they are at least 4 feet in width and are maintained. Debris, obstacles, and overgrowth of vegetation all force bicyclists into the travel lane. If edge line rumbles are applied, then the shoulder to the right of the rumbles should be at least five feet. If right of way and utility poles prevent having wide shoulders, even an addition of a few inches will make a difference for bicyclists to travel more safely.

Designated –marked bike lanes -- There is disagreement within the cycling community at large (nationally) as to whether the MUTCD signage for bike lanes should be used or not. Unfortunately, some motorists view these marked shoulders/lanes as where bicyclists should stay; they do not consider the need for cyclists to make left turns or to escape from broken glass or some other obstacle that is in their way in the bike lane. Also, there is concern that the road markings will not be maintained.

However, many cyclists take comfort in having marked bike lanes and motorists may view these bike lanes as reminders that cyclists may be on the road. Bike lanes can assist cyclists to make their way through an intersection. Cyclists who are unfamiliar with the roads in an area find bike lanes very reassuring. Much research has been undertaken and the above short commentary is meant to have planners review the latest research. Nor is it possible to satisfy everyone’s “opinion”.

There is new signage that was approved for MUTCD in December, 2009 - bicycle may use full lane. This may help with the need to educate motorists.
Traffic signals need to detect bicycles. This is a critical safety issue and can be undertaken when signals are being upgraded due to addition of turn lanes, for example, or new signals installed.

One of the key elements of any bike/ped plan is education of bicyclists and pedestrians and motorists. Thus, schools, PTOs, recreation programs, driver training programs should all be involved in promoting safe practices. For example, a great danger for bicyclists is riding on the wrong side of the road instead of riding with the flow of traffic.

**Comments on specific roads:**

- Dairy Road has a decent shoulder, but when the roadway crosses a bridge, concrete structures that are about a foot in height consume the shoulders. Bicyclists must move into the travel lane. There should be road surface signage to warn cyclists or Bicycle May Use Full Lane.

- Colebrook Road/SR241 and many other state roads were inflicted by PennDOT several years ago with edge line rumbles. This practice was contrary to policy and PennDOT is gradually removing them when resurfacing is scheduled. LVBC is actively engaged in an effort to speed up the removal of these edge line rumbles on SR241 and several other key roadways in Lebanon County. If N. Cornwall Township were to support our efforts, this would be appreciated and may save a cyclist’s life. Summer, 2010: side edge rumbles should be removed from Rocherty to 322 with the resurfacing project. (delayed until Spring, 2011)

- Cornwall Road has a special challenge for cyclists. It is the practice of some motorists to take the shoulder and use it as a right turn lane. One of our members who cycles daily to work has faced many close calls. Perhaps, share the road signage could be installed by N. Cornwall Township or some other measure be undertaken.

- Chestnut Street is used by cyclists to avoid cycling on SR422.

- Signage denoting the Farmland Preservation Loop and the Coleman Legacy would be greatly appreciated. I believe that other municipalities would be willing to do the same. The signage below was erected by an Ohio Township for the Adventure Cycling Underground Railroad route. Such signage creates a “welcome” feeling for cyclists as well as function for safety and not getting lost on the wrong roads.
Bicycle Parking – Bicyclists need to be able to park their bicycles. There are guidelines provided by the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals that include being able to have the bike secured in at least two places, the manner of locking as well as other criteria. Sheltered bike parking is also important. Some municipalities are requiring developers of business parks/commercial projects to include bike parking.

It would be superb if N. Cornwall Township designed the appropriate bike rack that could be used throughout Lebanon County. E&E Metalfab Inc, in Lebanon, did create bike racks for Lebanon at the request of the City’s Mayor in 2008.

LVBC has a copy of APBP’s Bike Parking Guide to share with municipalities and at www.apbp.org there is a free download resource for bike parking.
Footnote: These observations and suggestions have been prepared to provide an immediate response to Rettew’s request. Other LVBC members will be asked to review this initial response and LVBC may offer additional or different information.