

Project 19/65

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Manchester Reunited: Reconnecting Manchester to The River and The Region

OVERVIEW

Since the dawn of the civil rights era, Manchester has had strong community leadership that continues today. In recent years, Manchester completed a comprehensive and tactical planning that position it to redevelop with equity at its foundation. Essential to the success and future strength of those efforts is the equitable and multimodal reconnection of the Manchester and Chateau neighborhoods across the Pennsylvania State Route 65 (PA-65) corridor. To advance this critical project, the City of Pittsburgh (COP) and Manchester Citizens Corporation (MCC) request a grant from the Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) program to support an initial feasibility study and alternatives analysis. This project will focus on ways to functionally reunite Manchester and Chateau while ensuring the safety and connectivity of all PA-65 corridor users.

Manchester is a majority Black neighborhood in Pittsburgh and home to a rich history of Victorian architecture, productive riverfronts, and community organizing. When urban renewal threatened it in the mid-twentieth century, Black residents banded together to fight large-scale, modern development blocks. While some housing was saved, the neighborhood's business districts and continuous street grid were lost to a combination of government demolition, riots, and the construction of PA-65. Manchester had been one community as far back as 1843 but, as a result of this new highway, it was divided in two, with the land west of PA-65 named Chateau.

PA-65 began construction in 1960. The highway was built on a viaduct that stands as tall as 40 feet above the surrounding streets and only has two openings for east-west travel between the two neighborhoods. Parallel to the highway itself is a pair of one-way streets that range from two to four lanes wide; together, these roads create a 275-foot distance from sidewalk to sidewalk. Utilizing this corridor is unsafe for all modes given current conditions.

Community-driven planning efforts in the Manchester and Chateau neighborhoods have focused on ways to reunite the neighborhoods. Both the city-adopted 2019 Manchester-Chateau Neighborhood Plan and the 2021 Manchester (Re)united Transit Revitalization Investment District study explicitly call for lowering the road to reestablish a unified neighborhood and connected street network. In 2020, an EPA Greening America's Communities grant helped COP and MCC identify mid-term improvements to key connections in Manchester and Chateau. And in 2021, Pittsburgh Regional Transit (PRT) released a long-range plan identifying the corridor of PA-65 and parallel surface streets for future rapid transit service.

This RCP grant will allow COP, MCC, and their many local partners to begin a data- and community-driven exploration of how the PA-65 corridor in Manchester could better serve the people that surround it. While neighborhood residents have a desired outcome, we must take an unbiased approach to this exploratory process. There are many operational, structural, budgetary, and political conditions – both local and regional – that are critical considerations in developing alternatives. As such, the initial feasibility study and alternatives analysis completed with RCP support will take a neutral approach to planning outcomes in the corridor.

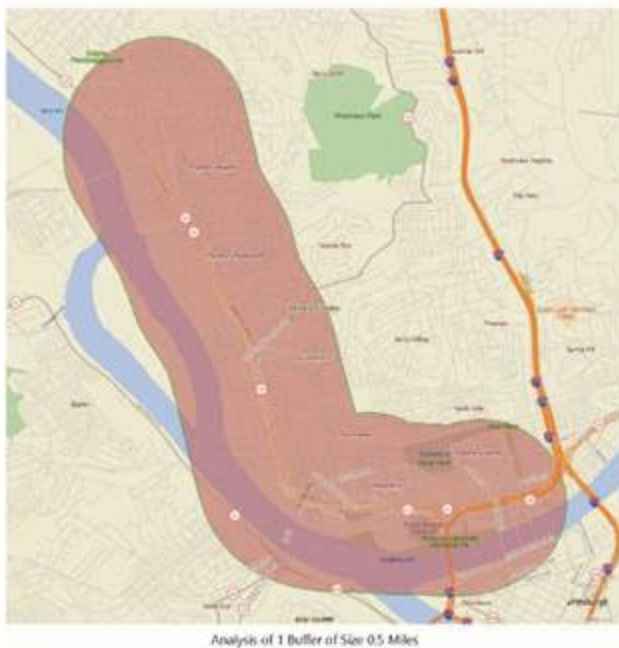
This planning process will allow government and community-based project stakeholders to understand what could be changed to improve east-west access in Manchester and Chateau, what costs and benefits are associated with various approaches to resolving current access challenges, and which approaches best meet the goals of all interested parties. COP and MCC seek to use this process to position priority alternatives for the project development process.

Location and Map

Manchester is home to 2,864 residents; Chateau adds just 7 more for a total of 2,871 people living in the community.^[1] The data show 75% of residents are people of color and that population is overwhelmingly Black (71% of residents).^[2] The median age is 34 years old, comparable to the citywide median of 33,^[3] and the median household income (MHI) is \$40,323, which is below Pittsburgh's MHI of \$50,536.^[4] The population today is notably different than it was prior to urban renewal efforts and the construction of PA-65, with a shift from a majority white to a majority non-white population between the years 1950 and 1970 as business districts crumbled and the remaining uses were separated.

PA-65 stretches 51 miles from its southern terminus at I-279N to the City of New Castle. Throughout its long length, PA-65 is only a limited access highway for the section located in Pittsburgh (approximately three miles). Accordingly, the federal function class for PA-65 from I-279N to the McKees Rocks Bridge is "Other Freeways and Expressways" and from the bridge north, it is "Other Principal Arterial Highways." According to PA Department of Transportation data, the annual average daily traffic on PA-65 within the City of Pittsburgh ranges from 7,619 to 13,283 vehicles in a 24-hour period, depending on the segment.^[5]

Screening Tool for Equity Analysis of Projects (STEAP)
Project Buffer Analysis Profile Report
Data Source: American Community Survey 2015-2019
Prepared by FHWA Office of Planning



The study area for the feasibility study and alternatives analysis outlined here will consist of the approximately 3-mile expressway portion of PA-65 located within Pittsburgh, between I-279N and the McKees Rocks Bridge (Figure 1). The approximately 1-mile section of PA-65 that serves as the western border of modern Manchester, and the walkable area around it, is of primary importance as it bisects a previously continuous urban fabric; north of this segment, the highway parallels the preexisting railroad corridor. However, adjoining segments north and south of Manchester and Chateau must consider various ramps, grade changes, and community connections.

Figure 1. Study area: segment of PA-65 from McKees Rocks Bridge to I-279N, including 0.5-mile buffer

To best explore and assess

the feasibility and preferability of new east-west multimodal connections, improved (i.e., rapid) transit service, and equitable development in the study area, alternatives will include a half-mile walkable area around the core corridor. This area is likely to see the greatest impacts of any

changes, but it also has the greatest potential to generate users for the corridor through infrastructure investment and economic development.

Located along the Ohio River, the Manchester and Chateau area's proximity to major waterfronts made it ideal for business development throughout the 19th century; these business owners lived in the neighborhood and gave rise to a diverse middle-class population. Development sprouted up around Ferry Street, later named Beaver Avenue, which served as a major commercial district until its demolition a century later.

Much of Manchester's remarkable Victorian architecture was built in the second half of the 1800s and much of it still stands today as a testament to the work of the neighborhood preservationists who fought urban renewal. Like other neighborhoods, Manchester and Chateau experienced population decline after WWII, but it wasn't until the construction of PA-65 that the neighborhoods saw massive, rapid disinvestment. The community led early historic preservation efforts in the Pittsburgh region, resulting in several nonprofit institutions that still

operate today. The Manchester National Register Historic District was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1975.

This community was developed around a regular grid structure, which was only interrupted by Pennsylvania Railroad tracks (running northwest-southeast) until PA-65 was built. Ferry Street (later Beaver Avenue) and Ohio Lane (later Pennsylvania Avenue) served as streetcar corridors from the nineteenth into the twentieth century, eventually being replaced by bus service that has struggled to adequately serve these areas without a connected street network. In many ways, Manchester is an island due to limited connections in and out: four along the east edge, three along the south, and two along the west. To this point, the Manchester-Chateau zip code has a Walk Score of 45 in what is otherwise a dense, flat, and gridded area. Allegheny West, immediately east of Manchester, has a score of 73 and Pittsburgh has an average score of 62.

There are two one-way, three-lane frontage roads along PA-65, Chateau Street in Manchester (state-owned) and Beaver Avenue in Chateau (city-owned), primarily intended for access to Chateau's industrial uses and nearby highways. There are two connections, between Manchester and Chateau, beneath PA-65: the Juniata Street underpass and Allegheny Avenue underpass, both of which are confusing to drivers and unsafe for people walking or cycling. The area has some bicycle-friendly facilities: relatively narrow streets in Manchester and a regionally connected trail in Chateau. However, a plethora of one-way streets in the area causes safety concerns and increases auto circulation.

Manchester and Chateau are served by three local bus routes and have access to light rail service at Allegheny Station, immediately south in the North Shore neighborhood. Local bus services are limited, with only one of the three routes extending into downtown Pittsburgh. Likewise, only roughly a quarter of the community is located within walking distance of frequent transit service (bus or light rail) in adjacent neighborhoods. As referenced above, PRT has included a study for a rapid transit connection beyond the Allegheny Station terminus in the North Side of the City of Pittsburgh to the Manchester-Chateau area and further along the Ohio River Boulevard corridor to Emsworth Borough as a priority in its long-range plan.^[6] The project outlined in this grant application is supported by PRT staff and will allow the agency to begin to advance rapid transit plans ahead of schedule.

The outcome of these historical and existing conditions is a neighborhood on one side of the highway, with a wealth of significant historic resources and a vital heritage as a leading Black neighborhood with almost no access to the riverfront. On the other side of the highway is an economically successful industrial and institutional area with almost no residential buildings and limited access to the riverfront.

Equity, Environmental Justice, and Community Engagement

Community Challenges and Needs

Manchester has endured a history of detrimental policies like many other urban areas. On a redlining map, Manchester was shown as part of zone D1, indicating that the area was hazardous, and investment should be directed elsewhere. In 1958, Pittsburgh joined other cities in creating zoning codes, intended to segregate people by segregating uses. Today, most of the neighborhood is zoned residential; it allows density of housing but no neighborhood-serving commercial among residences. In Chateau, Riverfront Zoning districts allow for a greater mix of uses.

The Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh (URA) targeted the area for massive urban renewal projects in the 1950s and 1960s, calling it a blighted slum. The URA planned to raze much of the neighborhood and did remove key portions. However, by the mid-1960s, a concerted preservation effort was underway with the founding of Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation (PHLF) in Manchester. The founding of Manchester Citizens Corporation (MCC) in 1965, also contributed to Manchester being a model for African American community activism and advocacy that continues today.

Despite strong community leadership, the effects of mid-twentieth-century urban policy can still be seen in Manchester and Chateau. As shown in *Table 1* below, the area is home to a higher concentration of people of color, people with low incomes, and unemployed people than the surrounding areas.^[7]

Table 1. Socioeconomic Indicators

Data	M & C Value	City Ave	State Ave	%ile in State	US Ave	%ile in US
Demographic Index	56%	37%	26%	87	36%	79
People of Color	72%	35%	24%	89	40%	79
Low Income	39%	39%	28%	75	31%	68
Unemployment Rate	10%	6%	5%	85	5%	84
Linguistically Isolated	0%	2%	2%	58	5%	45
Less Than HS Education	3%	7%	9%	23	12%	21
Under Age 5	4%	5%	6%	37	6%	32
Over Age 64	14%	15%	18%	35	16%	50

Manchester and Chateau are also in the top quartile nationally for all EJ Index indicators, showing that the area's location amid major transportation corridors and industrial areas is having an adverse effect on the environment and public health (see *Table 2*).^[8]

Table 2. Environmental Justice Indexes

Selected Variables	%ile in State	%ile in EPA Region	%ile in USA
EJ Index for Particulate Matter 2.5	88	85	76
EJ Index for Ozone	87	83	75
EJ Index for 2017 Diesel Particulate Matter	89	86	80
EJ Index for 2017 Air Toxics Cancer Risk	89	85	78
EJ Index for 2017 Air Toxics Respiratory HI	88	83	75
EJ Index for Traffic Proximity	96	94	91
EJ Index for Lead Paint	88	90	88
EJ Index for Superfund Proximity	85	81	78
EJ Index for RMP Facility Proximity	82	80	70
EJ Index for Hazardous Waste Proximity	91	88	84
EJ Index for Underground Storage Tanks	90	90	84
EJ Index for Wastewater Discharge	91	93	86

As a result of the challenges documented above, Manchester has demonstrated need for better access to jobs (especially those offering a living wage), goods, and services. Residents also need better access to food; the Manchester-Chateau community is low-income and a significant number of residents both do not own a car and live more than a half-mile from the nearest grocery store.^[9] To address this, MCC partners with a local grocery chain to bring a mobile market to residents on Sundays but access is still limited.

This planning project will explore ways to remediate the harms done by mid-century policy and the lack of access for residents today through creative, sustainable, and equitable solutions developed with and for community members. Solutions will improve connections between Manchester's residential core and nearby nodes of commercial and industrial uses. They will also focus on improving connections between residents and the new jobs, goods, and services anticipated in Chateau when new development arrives. Moreover, this project will focus on developing transportation and infrastructure solutions that also reduce climate impacts, improve air quality, reduce stormwater runoff, improve traveler safety, and support equitable economic and social development.

Mobility and Community Connectivity

As discussed above, PA-65 represents real historical, physical, and psychological barriers to the ability of Manchester to achieve the goals that the community has set. The highway has been a challenge to investment, access, and vitality in the area for more than sixty years. While this application and the scope outlined herein will not presume solutions, it is fundamental to this effort that resulting strategies must overcome these barriers.

COP and MCC are committed to advancing mobility options that people can afford to help them get to more places. For example, they are currently engaged in a Universal Basic Mobility (UBM) demonstration program. Principle wage earners in participating households (at or below 80% AMI) will be provided with a basket of transportation services at no cost, which include mass transit, micromobility, shared car and/or ride sharing services. Researchers will track relevant metrics to evaluate the benefit of providing a universal basic level of reliable mobility.

Originally constructed beginning in 1960, PA-65 is not a new facility but has been well-maintained. There are no capital funds programmed for roadway maintenance through June 30, 2028. Pavement restoration is programmed for the four-year period from state fiscal years 2029 through 2032.

Equitable Development and Shared Prosperity

Figure 2. Rendering of a possible future PA-65 corridor from Manchester Chateau Neighborhood



As noted

previously, Manchester and Chateau completed both the city-adopted 2019 Manchester-Chateau Neighborhood Plan (MCNP) and the 2021 Manchester (Re)united Transit Revitalization Investment District (TRID) study. The former identifies long-term scenarios that include major infrastructure changes that result in significantly increased east-west connectivity (*Figure 2*). The latter calls on COP and MCC to “initiate formal study of re-imagining SR 65.”^[10]



Figure 3. Rendering of near-term public space improvements from Manchester (Re)united TRID study

Since the removal of the Beaver Avenue and Pennsylvania Avenue business districts more than a half-century ago, Manchester has had a dearth of neighborhood-serving businesses. To realize the vibrancy, stability, and equity that the neighborhood could achieve, residents of all incomes and abilities must be able to access basic needs within about a half-mile of their homes. To that end, MCC has a vision to reestablish a Black Wall Street in the community. MCC hopes to begin fostering development of this vision with near-term public space improvements that include booths for small businesses (*Figure 3*) and follow that with implementation of recommendations from this study that identify opportunities

for commercial development, including those that would be newly accessible to residents when PA-65 is improved.

The MCNP also recommends incorporating the community’s cultural heritage and inspiring architecture into public infrastructure through local art and design along the riverfront and throughout neighborhoods. This study will explore

opportunities to fill gaps in the land uses and amenities available to people within the study area. Among those will likely be places that highlight the remarkable history of the area, in terms of both people and design, as well as providing safe, attractive, sustainable places that give people access to the outdoors and each other.

Based on the neighborhood plan, MCC is aggressively pursuing a one-to-one ratio of market rate to affordable housing in both the rental and for-sale markets to ensure accessibility to current and future residents of various means. Existing neighborhood residents are prioritized as buyers for new affordable for-sale housing. MCC partners with local social service organizations to ensure those buyers are prepared to take on the financial obligation of homeownership; those services extend beyond finances to the whole person with programs focusing on health and wellness, youth education, workforce development, and access to higher education.

[1] US Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2020 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table B02001; generated by Breen Masciotra; <https://www.data.census.gov>; (11 October 2022).

[2] US Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2020 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table B02001; generated by Breen Masciotra; <https://www.data.census.gov>; (11 October 2022).

[3] US Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2020 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table B01002; generated by Breen Masciotra; <https://www.data.census.gov>; (11 October 2022).

[4] US Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2020 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table B02001; generated by Breen Masciotra; <https://www.data.census.gov>; (11 October 2022).

[5] Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. "Traffic Monitoring Report." Prepared by PennDOT Traffic Information Repository (TIRe). <https://gis.penndot.gov/tire> (11 October 2022).

[6] Pittsburgh Regional Transit, "NEXTtransit 25-year Long-Range Transportation Plan," (Pittsburgh, PA, 2021), 65.

[7] EPA. "Socioeconomic Indicators." Prepared by Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool (Version 2.1). <https://ejscreen.epa.gov/mapper/> (11 October 2022).

[8] EPA. "Environmental Justice Indexes." Prepared by Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool (Version 2.1). <https://ejscreen.epa.gov/mapper/> (11 October 2022).

[9] USDA. "Go to the Atlas." Prepared by USDA Economic Research Service. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/go-to-the-atlas/> (11 October 2022).

[10] Manchester Citizens Corporation and City of Pittsburgh, "Manchester (Re)united," (Pittsburgh, PA, 2021), 56.