

MONTCO

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MONTCO 2040: A SHARED VISION







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## MONTCO 2040: A SHARED VISION

## WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

A comprehensive plan is a long-range plan required by state law for guiding the growth and physical development of a place. The Philadelphia region as a whole has a comprehensive plan, as do most of the 62 municipalities in Montgomery County. So, with all these comprehensive plans, what is the role of a county plan?

The county plan provides an overall land use and growth management framework for local municipal plans and provides guidance on issues that transcend local boundaries, such as highways, public transportation, flooding, trails, growth trends, redevelopment trends, shopping needs, impact of large developments, overall housing needs, natural systems, economic growth, etc. The county plan is an advisory document used to guide county and local municipal policies.

## WHAT IS IN MONTCO 2040: A SHARED VISION?

*Montco 2040: A Shared Vision* is Montgomery County's new comprehensive plan. It reflects the input of thousands of citizens, county officials, and a steering committee made up of many diverse stakeholders. The plan was prepared by the county planning commission and will be adopted by the County Commissioners.

The plan provides goals and implementation steps for managing the county's built environment. It is structured around three themes:

- Connected Communities
- Sustainable Places
- Vibrant Economy

The plan also provides a vision for the future of the county and includes an overall transportation vision, a land use vision, and a strategic vision. This vision is highlighted in this **Executive Summary**.



Comprehensive plans guide improvements to the built environment, ranging from highways and trails...



... to growth trends, housing needs, economic growth, flooding, and redevelopment.

## PLAN THEMES

Montco 2040: A Shared Vision is designed around three interrelated themes.



### Connected Communities

People want to be connected and part of a broader community. A key role for the county is to help these connections occur beyond local municipal boundaries.

#### Connected Communities involve:

- Collaboration among stakeholders
- Improved transportation choices
- Trails and greenways connecting multiple places
- Vibrant downtowns and destinations accessible by everyone

### Sustainable Places

The county is full of wonderful neighborhoods and communities. These places need to be sustained and enhanced in a long-lasting and effective way.

#### Sustainable Places involve:

- Modernized infrastructure network
- Improved stormwater management
- Protected natural resources
- Opportunities for healthy lifestyles
- Diverse housing choices
- Enhanced community character

### Vibrant Economy

A strong economy is critical for all places. With a vibrant economy, residents can earn and spend more, governments can make needed infrastructure improvements, and businesses can grow.

#### A Vibrant Economy involves:

- Improved transportation access
- Focused development
- Attraction and retention of businesses
- Flexibly adapting to changing market conditions
- Marketing of assets

Partnerships - Diversity - Growth - Quality Public Services - Community - Changing Demographics

## OVERALL VISION

Over the next 25 years, the county will see a variety of improvements that will connect communities, sustain places, support a vibrant economy, and implement land use and transportation visions. County priorities are listed below.

### Connected Communities

By 2040, the county will take a number of steps to connect communities:

- Encouraging more collaboration and partnerships - the county will participate actively in local and regional organizations while encouraging municipalities to work together and expand multi-municipal planning.
- Improving transportation quality and options - priorities include improving the current road system adding new Turnpike interchanges; improving the frequency of service on the Norristown, Warminster, and West Trenton lines; extending the Norristown High Speed Line to King of Prussia; and making communities more walkable.
- Expanding county trails and greenways - expanding the county trail system is a priority, beginning with completion of the Schuylkill Valley, Chester Valley, Pennypack, Wissahickon, and Cross County trails.
- Supporting strong downtowns and community destinations - making the county's downtown areas appealing destinations for local residents, visitors, and skilled high tech and creative workers is very important.

*Strong  
partnerships  
are critical for  
making Montco  
2040: A Shared  
Vision a reality.*



## Sustainable Places

By 2040, the county will take a number of steps to sustain places:

- Supporting a modernized infrastructure network - improving county roads and bridges and advocating for other infrastructure providers to modernize their systems are priorities.
- Improving stormwater management - implementing the county's MS4 permit requirements and completing the required ACT 167 stormwater management plans are priorities.
- Conserving natural resources - improving county parks, protecting conservation areas, and continuing the farmland preservation program are extremely important.
- Providing opportunities for healthy lifestyles - adding loop trails and fitness stations to county parks and advocating for county residents to exercise and have fun are priorities.
- Supporting diverse housing choices - supporting new affordable housing developments, providing housing for the disabled, and helping homeless residents are critically important priorities.
- Enhancing community character - supporting neighborhood improvements and updating the county's emergency dispatch system are county priorities.

*Sustainable practices will keep the county a great place to live and work.*



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### Vibrant Economy

By 2040, the county will take a number of steps to support a vibrant economy:

- Improving transportation access to businesses - reducing congestion while adding new interchanges and other road access to businesses, as well as public transit access, are priorities.
- Encouraging focused development - encouraging new development in the county's many business parks, office campuses, and industrial areas is a county priority.
- Attracting and retaining businesses - partnering with regional and state economic development agencies to expand the county's economy while training the workforce to meet current industry needs are priorities.
- Flexibly adapting to market conditions - attracting millennials and high tech, creative workers is a priority.
- Facilitate marketing of the county - making regional and national visitors and businesses aware of the county's many assets is important.

*Having a vibrant economy with good jobs is critically important.*



## Land Use and Transportation

By 2040, the county will take a number of steps to support the land use and transportation visions:

- **Advocating for land use** - although much of the county will remain relatively unchanged by 2040, other areas may see significant changes. Important land use considerations include;
  - Creating more walkable development around train stations
  - Encouraging mixed use development in regional mixed use business centers
  - Reinventing business and office parks
  - Increasing the vibrancy of downtowns
  - Limiting development in rural areas
  - Diversifying retail commercial areas
  - Providing a range protecting existing neighborhoods, important historic properties, and vulnerable natural resources of housing options
- **Improving transportation** - completing existing road and transit projects while finding ways to fund additional projects are priorities for the county. Creating a more walkable landscape is also critically important.

*In 2040, the county will be interconnected, sustainable, and vibrant.*



## MAPPING THE VISION - OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS

Successful natural resource, farmland, and open space preservation will be achieved through partnerships. Conservation Opportunity Areas are a priority for preservation and include environmentally-sensitive areas where fee-simple purchases, easements, and zoning ordinances can be used for protection. Rural Resource Areas consist of farms and scattered homes. Farmland preservation is a priority in these areas.

Trails are a connecting element in the county's open space and parkland network. The proposed county trail system consists of 257 miles of trails; so far, 84 miles of this network have been built. In some locations, these trails, such as the Schuylkill River Trail, will be paved, multi-purpose trails. In other locations, they will be gravel or cinder and some might be narrow walking trails. The county will own and maintain many of the trails, but some of them will be owned and maintained by local municipalities or other entities.

Expanding the trail system is a county priority. The highest priority trails, expected to be completed over the next 5 to 10 years include portions of the Schuylkill River Trail, Chester Valley Trail, Pennypack Trail, Wissahickon Trail, Cross County Trail, and Power Line Trail. These proposed projects fill in missing links, create trail loops, and/or extend the trail system into the county's most populous areas.

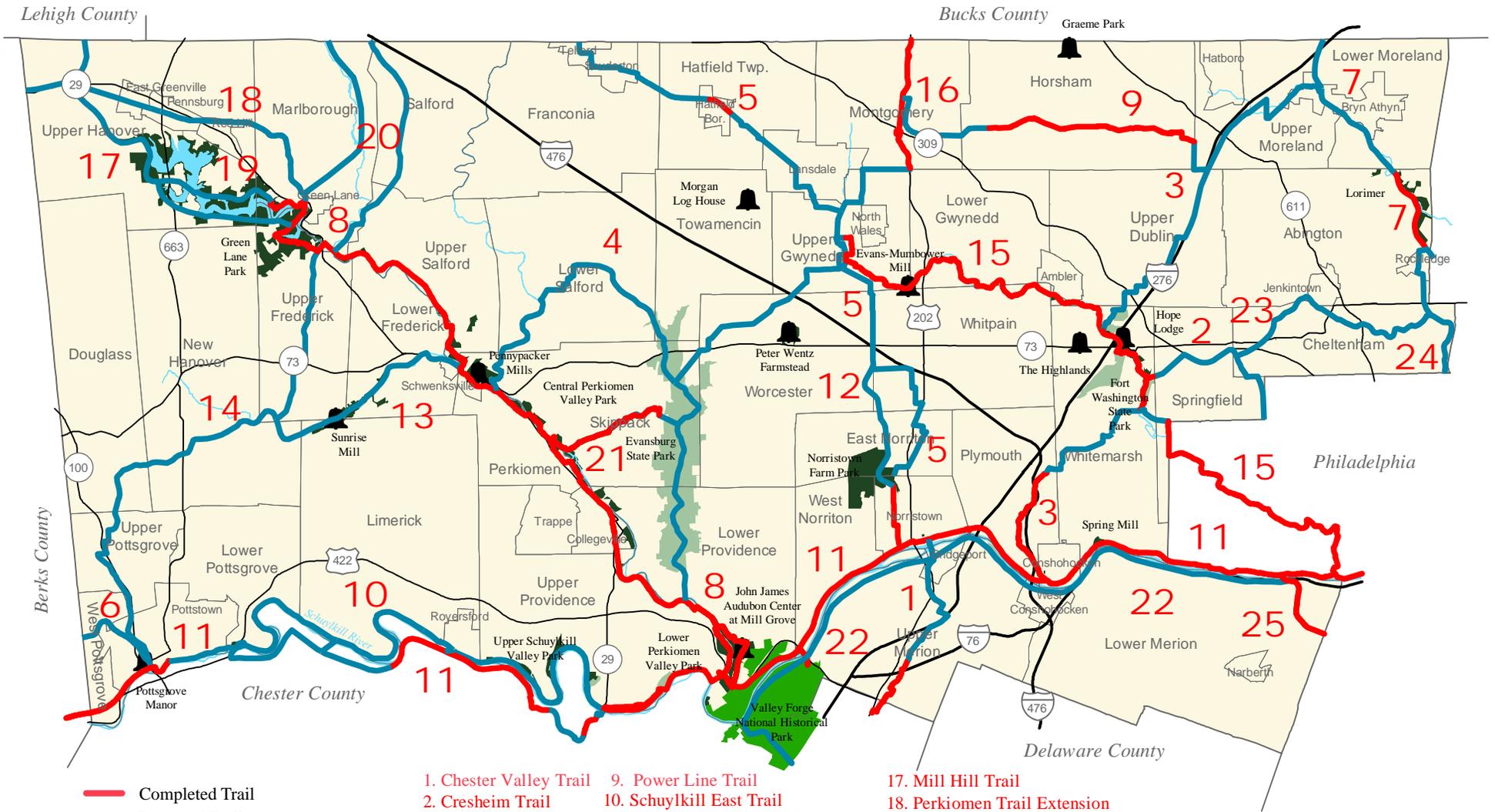


Local parks and trails are a key element in the county's open space network.



Trails can connect residential neighborhoods with community focal points.

OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS



- Completed Trail
- Proposed Trail
- County Owned Land
- State Owned Land
- Valley Forge National Historical Park
- Historic Sites

- |                         |                                    |                               |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Chester Valley Trail | 9. Power Line Trail                | 17. Mill Hill Trail           |
| 2. Cresheim Trail       | 10. Schuylkill East Trail          | 18. Perkiomen Trail Extension |
| 3. Cross County Trail   | 11. Schuylkill River Trail         | 19. Green Lane Park           |
| 4. Evansburg Trail      | 12. Stony Creek Trail              | 20. Highlands Trail           |
| 5. Liberty Bell Trail   | 13. Sunrise Trail                  | 21. Skippack Trail            |
| 6. Manatawny Trail      | 14. West County Trail              | 22. Schuylkill West Trail     |
| 7. Pennypack Trail      | 15. Wissahickon Green Ribbon Trail | 23. Tookany Creek Trail       |
| 8. Perkiomen Trail      | 16. 202 Parkway Trail              | 24. Rockledge Trail           |
|                         |                                    | 25. Cynwyd Heritage Trail     |



## MAPPING THE VISION - LAND USE

Over the next 25 years, the land use pattern in the county will evolve, reflecting market trends, consumer demand, and government policy. In 2040, the county's future land use will include:

- Attractive, prosperous, and accessible residential neighborhoods designed for neighborly interaction.
- Traditional rural landscapes with preserved farms, wooded valleys, and country homes.
- Modern, walkable, green, connected, and mixed use commercial and community cores.
- Vibrant downtowns and village centers.
- New high tech, life sciences, professional, financial service, and advanced manufacturing development in research centers, business parks, and mixed use cores.
- Interconnected greenways, trails, and parks.

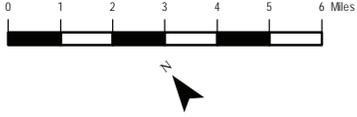
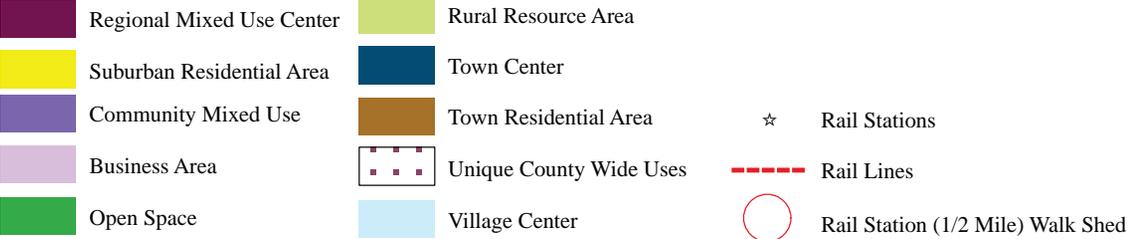
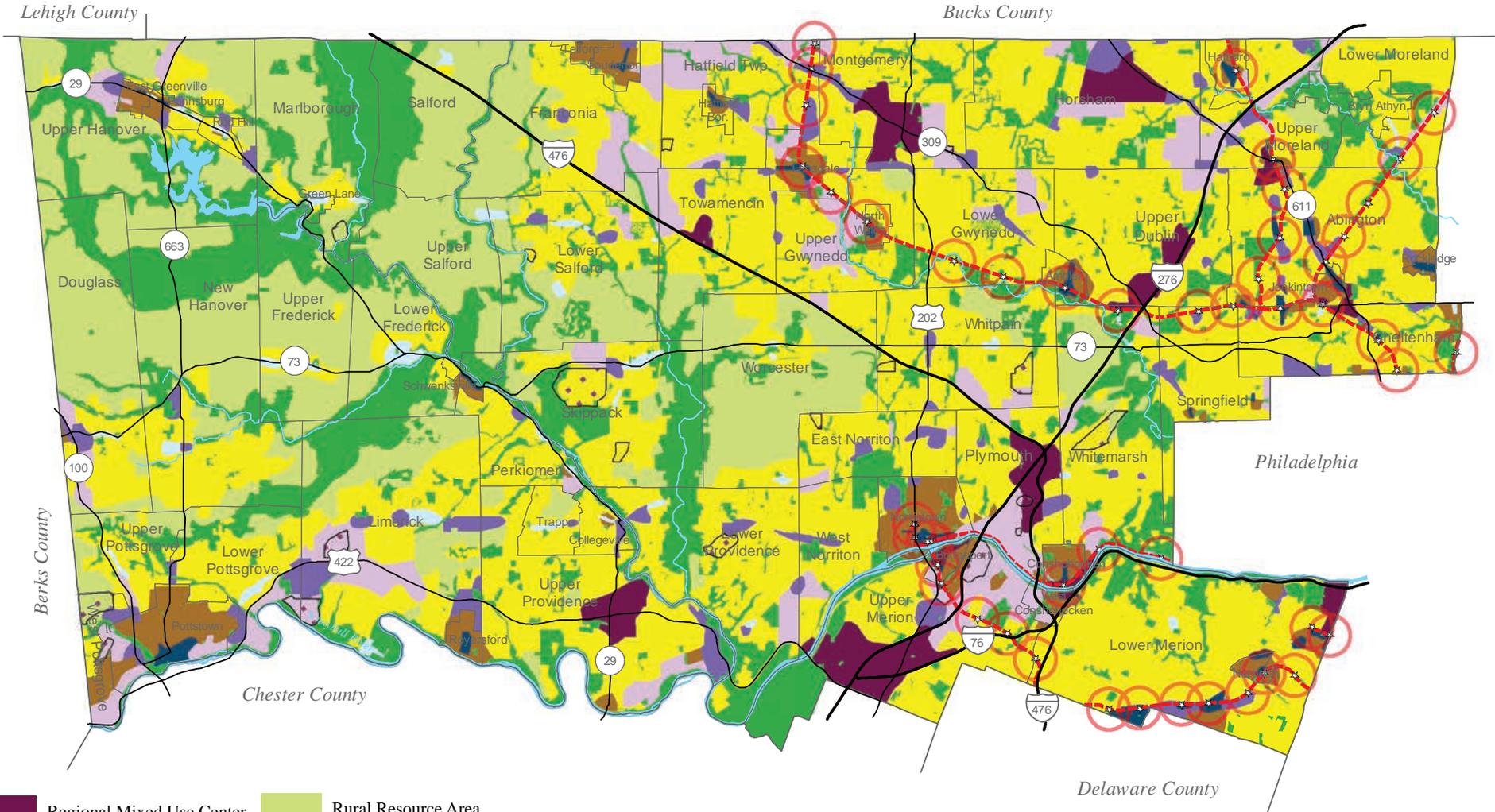


Office areas, commercial strips, mixed use areas, downtown edges, land near train stations, and retail centers may see new walkable, mixed use development.



The county's residential neighborhoods should remain relatively unchanged in the future.

FUTURE LAND USE



## MAPPING THE VISION - TRANSPORTATION

Over the next 25 years, the transportation network will expand, reflecting investment in road improvements, public transit, trails, and sidewalks. In 2040, the county's transportation network will include:

- New road choices and improved road conditions.
- Bridges and roads that are in a good state of repair.
- Improved public transit access, service, and frequency.
- An extensive county trail system that is connected with local municipal trails and regional trails.
- Improved bikeability of roads and bicycle facilities.
- An expanded sidewalk and pedestrian network designed to make walking easy, comfortable, and safe.
- Increased use of travel demand management strategies.

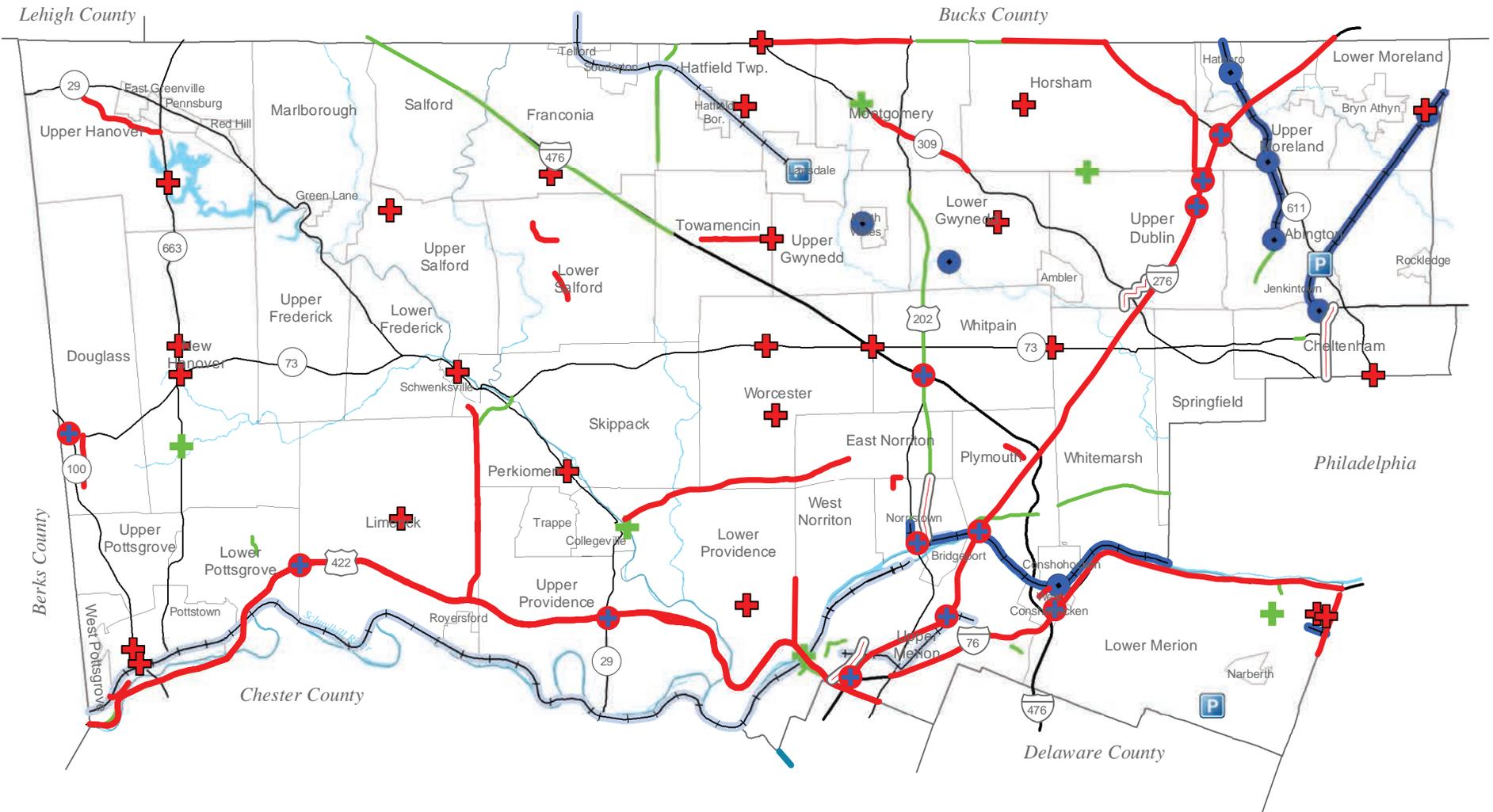


Both public transit and roads should be more convenient and less time consuming to use.



Walking should be easier and safer.

TRANSPORTATION



Programmed Road Projects

- + Intersections and Interchanges
- Major Capital Projects

Vision Road Projects

- + Interchange
- + Intersection
- Major Capital Project
- Road Diet

Programmed and Vision Transit Projects

- P Parking Garage
- Station Improvements
- Rail Service Extensions
- Frequency Increase







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**This Executive Summary highlights key recommendations in *Montco 2040: A Shared Vision*, which is the new comprehensive plan for Montgomery County.**



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