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Lehigh Avenue – Frequently Asked Questions about Bus Lanes and Traffic Impacts

1. WHY A BUS LANE? WILL IT REALLY IMPROVE BUS SERVICE?

2,800 people use the bus on Lehigh Ave every day, but bus speeds are slow (7.6mph). A bus lane will make the bus faster and more reliable.

Research On other streets in Philadelphia with a bus lane, bus speeds have improved 7% to 15%, while buses on similar routes without bus lanes have *slowed* by 4%¹. This includes Market Street (20th to 15th), JFK Boulevard (15th to 19th Streets), and Chestnut Street (Broad to 2nd).

2. WHAT WILL CHANGE ABOUT THE STREET WITH A BUS LANE?

Instead of two travel lanes shared by buses and drivers like there are today, this design will have one lane for drivers, and one lane primarily for buses. Vehicles turning right, accessing parking, or driveways, plus emergency vehicles are permitted in the bus lane. This means **during rush hour people driving could be in traffic for up to 1.5 minutes longer than they are today.**



Photo: Market Street Bus Lane | Foto: Carril bus de Market Street



Photo: Traffic at Front & Mascher St. | Foto: Trafico entre Front & Mascher

3. WON'T PEOPLE JUST DRIVE OR PARK IN THE BUS LANE?

On streets where Philadelphia has added a bus lane, **studies found that 81-92%² of the time drivers stay out of the bus lane.**

¹ <https://www.phila.gov/media/20230816103720/JFK-Boulevard-and-Market-Street-Bus-Only-Lane-Pilot-Evaluation-Report-08-2023.pdf>
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In the future, cameras could be added to buses on Lehigh Avenue to help keep the bus lane clear of parked and stopped cars. The cameras would take photos of license plate numbers of any vehicles parked in the bus lane, and then tickets would be issued. SEPTA successfully piloted this program on Chestnut St and Walnut St on Routes 21 and 42 from April 20 to June 28, 2023, and has plans to implement it on other streets in the city starting in 2025. We expect to see more drivers following the bus lane rules after the camera program launches.

4. WILL THE BUS LANES OR TRAFFIC SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS SLOW DOWN EMERGENCY VEHICLES?

No. The City works closely with first responders to make sure our designs do not slow down emergency vehicles.

Ambulances, fire trucks, and other emergency vehicles will be able to use the bus lane in an emergency to pass other drivers.

The speed slots will have gaps to let emergency vehicles pass through without slowing.

Where necessary, the center median will be designed to have gaps for emergency vehicles to make U-turns.

5. HOW CAN DRIVERS MAKE TURNS WITH THIS DESIGN?

This design will change how drivers make turns at intersections and driveways. **It will lower the risk that a person will get hit by a driver while using the crosswalk or walking across a driveway. According to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), medians with marked crosswalks can reduce pedestrian crashes by 46%, and refuge islands can reduce pedestrian crashes by 56%.³**

Left Turns: This design will prevent drivers from making some left turns at some driveways, at small one-way streets, and at some signalized intersections where today not many people make left turns. At intersections where many drivers turn left, the median will have a left turn lane and a turn arrow. Where there are not as many drivers turning, lefts are prevented by the center median.

Right Turns: Drivers turning right can use the bus lane to turn. Right turns on red lights will not be allowed at any signalized intersection.

Driveways & Parking Lots: The driveways for Temple University Hospital, Fine Fair Grocery, and the County Assistance Office, and some others, will NOT be impacted by the median.

For driveways and parking lots that are impacted, drivers will only be able to enter by turning right from Lehigh Avenue. Many parking lots have other entrances on side streets to provide access for drivers. If there isn't a second driveway on a side street, a driver would have to go around the block to get into the driveway by turning right.

³ Source: <https://highways.dot.gov/safety/proven-safety-countermeasures/medians-and-pedestrian-refuge-islands-urban-and-suburban-areas>

The City will work with property owners in the next phase of the project to understand driveway impacts more fully and make changes if needed. The design is not finalized.

6. HOW MUCH WILL TRAFFIC BE IMPACTED WITH THIS DESIGN?

During morning and evening rush hour people driving will be in traffic for about 1.5 minutes more than they are today. Today during rush hour it takes about 5 to 5.5 minutes when you drive between Kensington Ave. and American St. **Traffic models show it could take 7 minutes with the new design** during rush hour.

The traffic will change depending on what time of day you are driving and where you are on Lehigh Avenue. In general, drivers going west on Lehigh (towards Broad Street) will not see much more traffic than there is today. Drivers going east on Lehigh (towards I-95) will see more traffic, especially during evening rush hour. **Look at the Traffic Impact Diagrams on next pages for more details.**

This traffic delay is estimated using two computer programs, Synchro and SimTraffic, which are commonly used by city engineers nationwide. However, **there is no way to predict exactly what will happen in the future.**

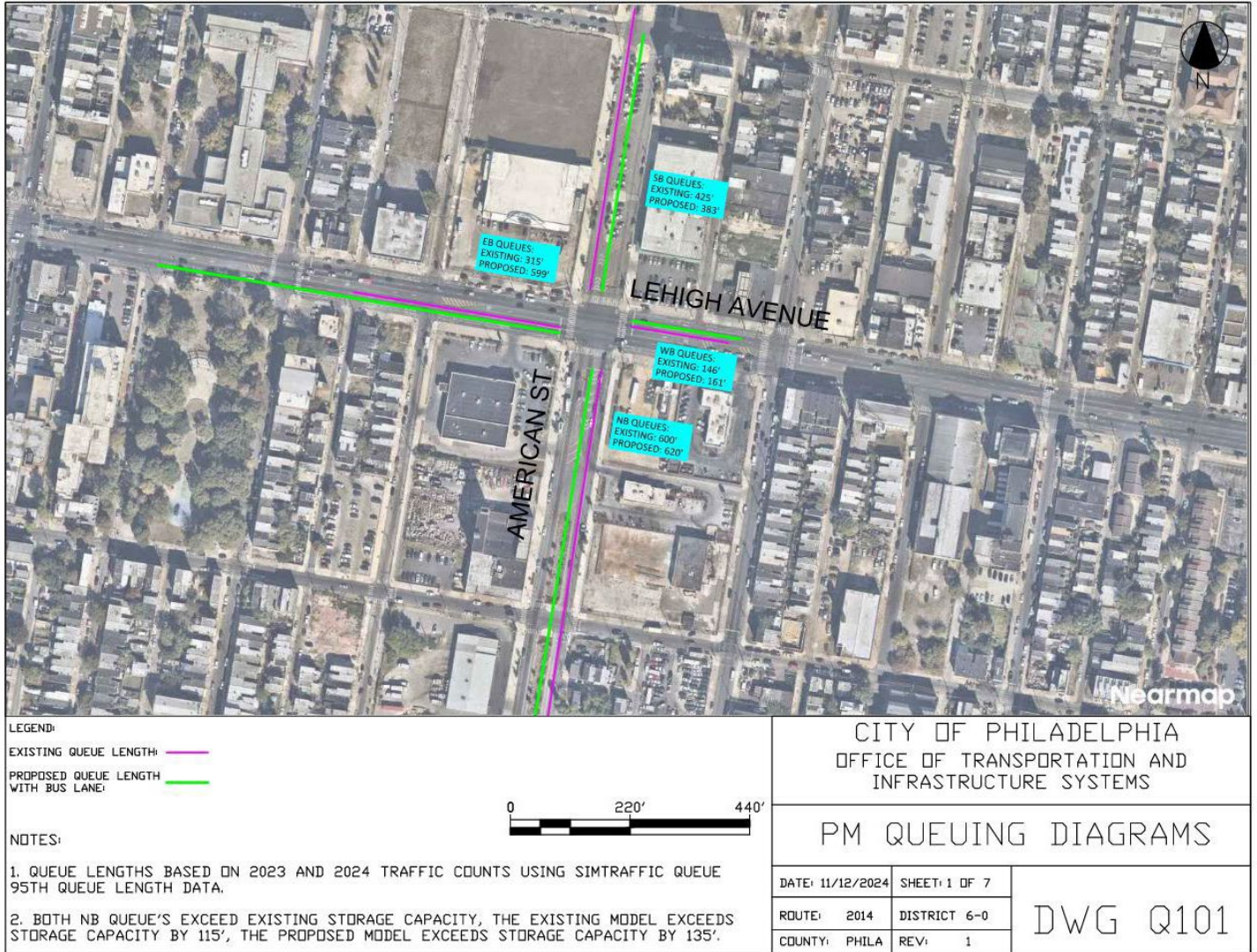
7. WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP REDUCE TRAFFIC CONGESTION?

If people adjust their travel habits, traffic might not be as bad as computer models suggest, since those models do not consider how people's choices can shift. These are some of the changes to travel behavior that would improve traffic:

- Drivers might choose to travel before or after rush hour
- Drivers might choose to take a different route
- People might carpool, ride the bus, bike, or walk instead of driving

Traffic Impact Diagrams – PM Rush Hour

Lehigh Avenue and American Street

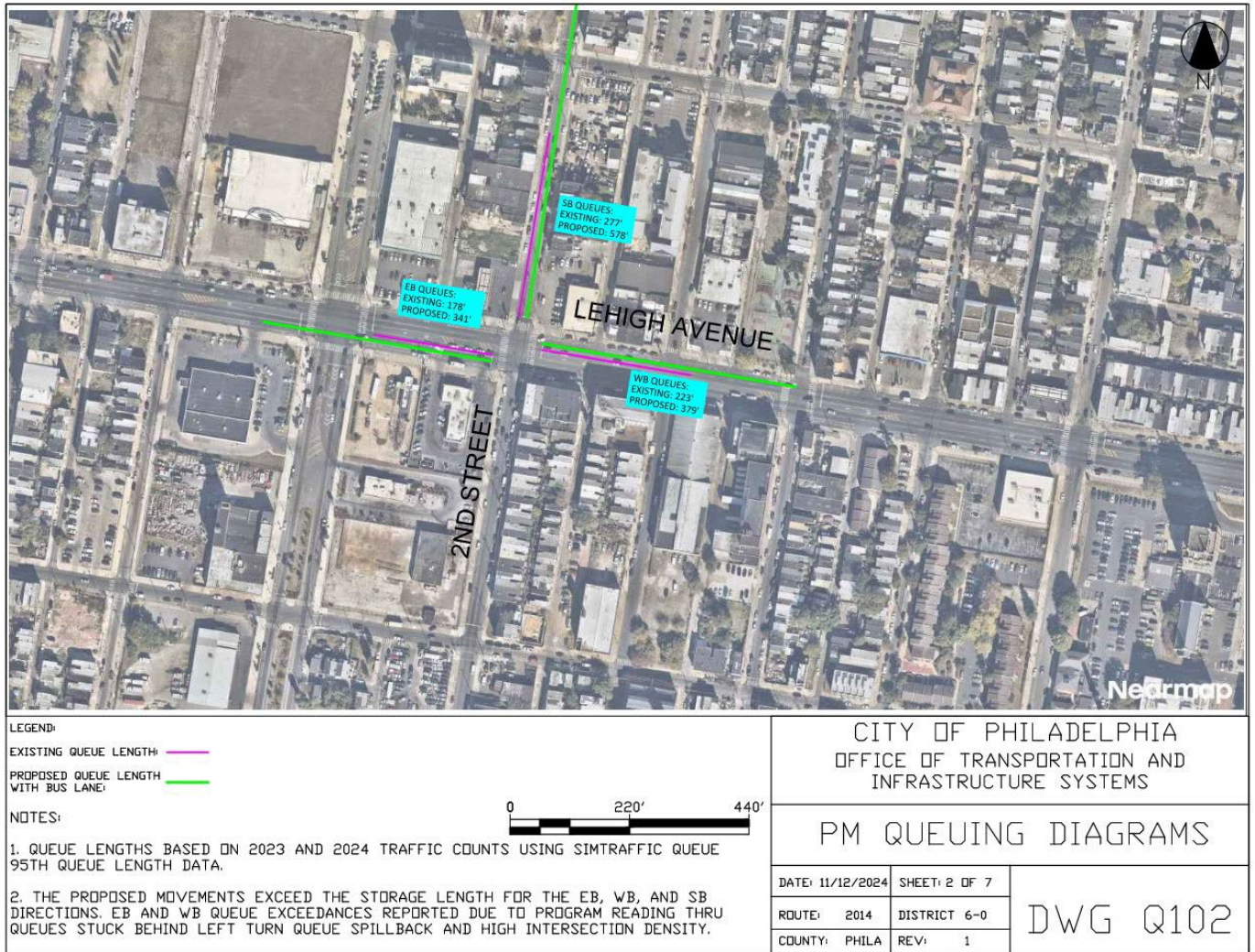


This diagram shows what our computer models predict the traffic experience will be like for drivers at a red light during evening rush hour (4pm-6pm) at the Lehigh and American intersection.

Drivers traveling west on Lehigh Avenue will experience similar traffic, but drivers traveling east will experience more traffic, with queues backing up to Lawrence Street due to the lane drop at American Street. Eastbound (EB) drivers will likely have to wait through two light cycles to get through the intersection.

Drivers traveling on American Street in both directions will experience queuing, the NB drivers will see a slight increase in queues while the SB drivers will see a slight decrease.

Lehigh Avenue and 2nd Street

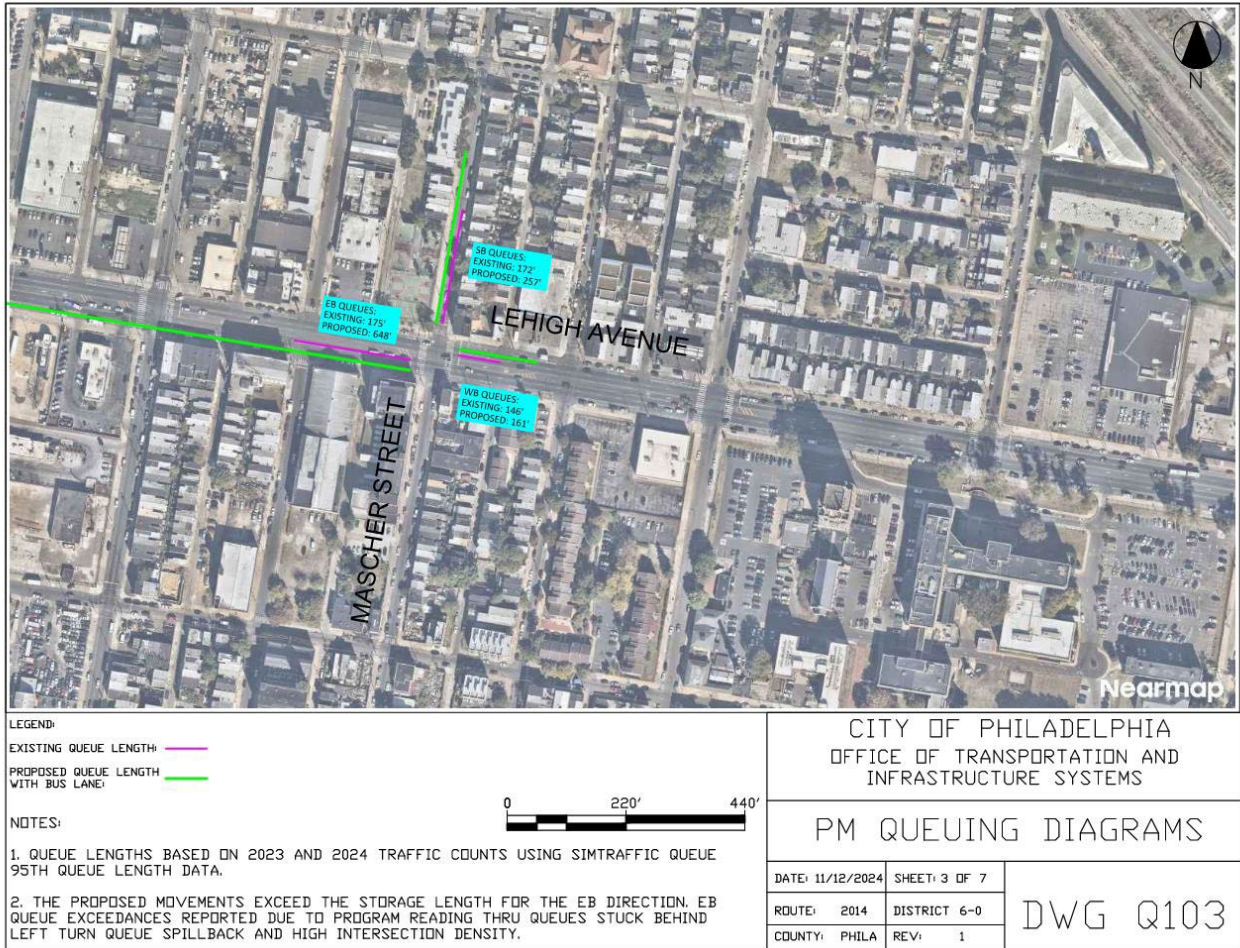


This diagram shows what our computer models predict the traffic experience will be like for drivers at a red light during evening rush hour (4pm-6pm) at the Lehigh and 2nd intersection.

Drivers traveling both directions on Lehigh Avenue will experience more traffic, with the potential for EB drivers to experience queue exceedances.

Drivers traveling on 2nd Street will experience increased queuing.

Lehigh Avenue and Mascher Street

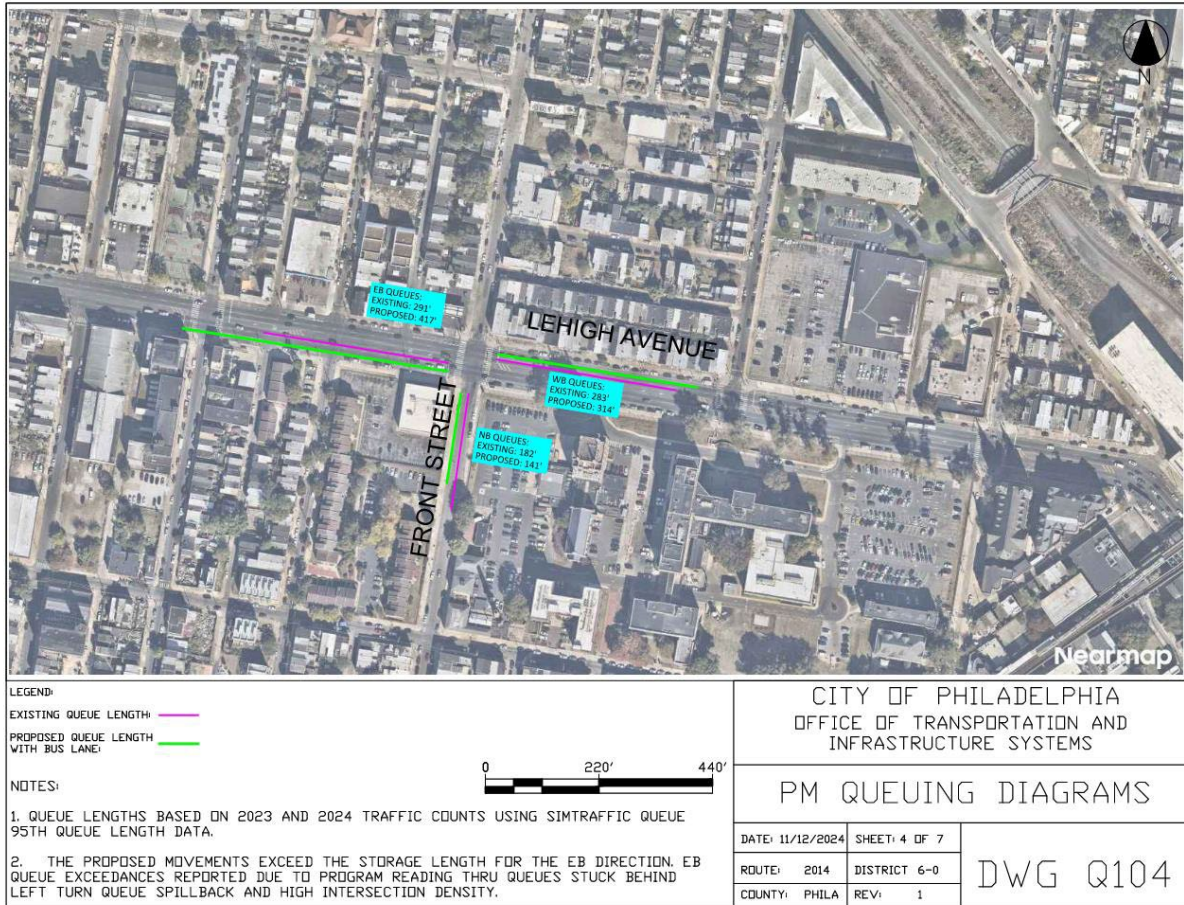


This diagram shows what our computer models predict the traffic experience will be like for drivers at a red light during evening rush hour (4pm-6pm) at the Lehigh and Mascher intersection.

Drivers traveling west on Lehigh Avenue will experience similar traffic, but drivers traveling east will experience more traffic, with queues backing up past 2nd Street. Eastbound drivers may have to wait through two light cycles to get through the intersection.

Drivers traveling on Mascher Street will experience increased queuing but will be able to clear the light in one cycle.

Lehigh Ave and Front Street

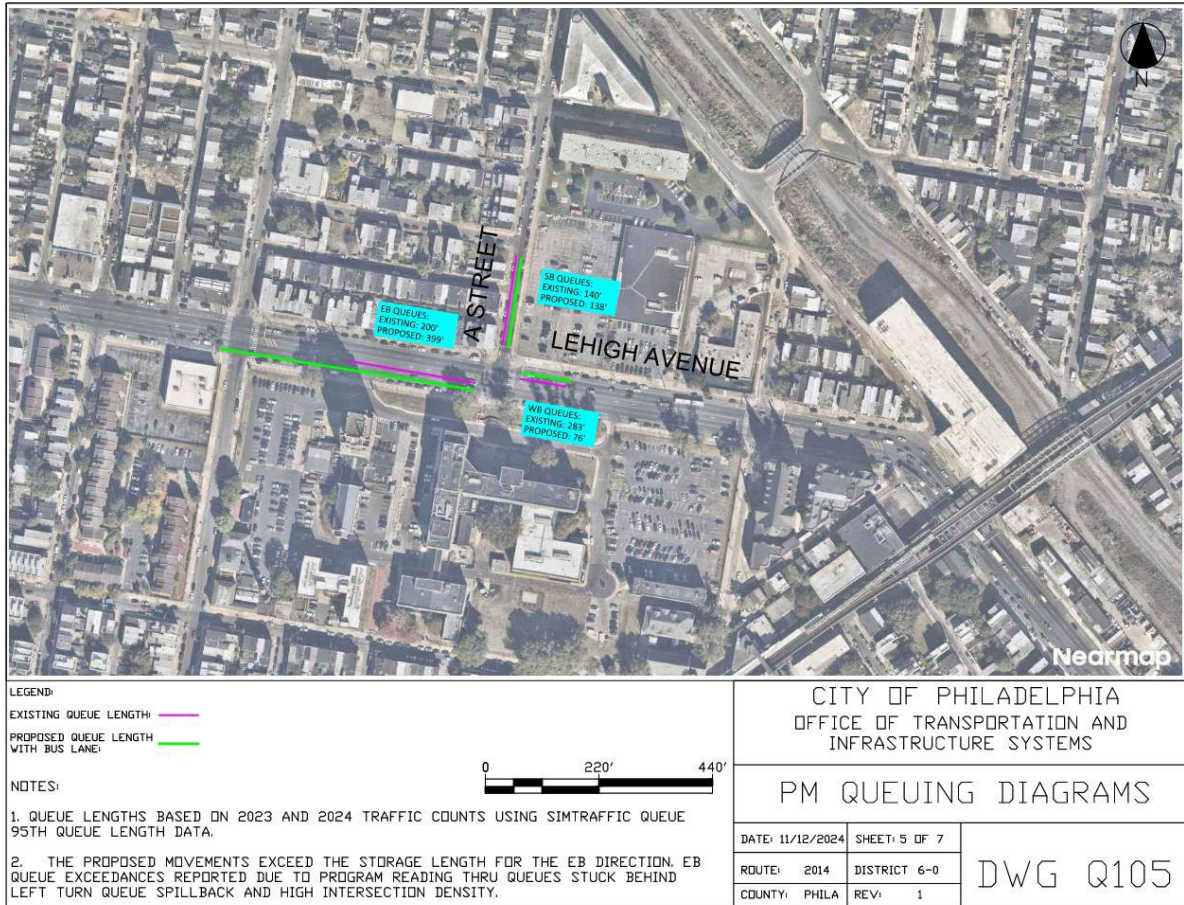


This diagram shows what our computer models predict the traffic experience will be like for drivers at a red light during evening rush hour (4pm-6pm) at the Lehigh and Front intersection.

Drivers traveling west on Lehigh Avenue will experience similar traffic, but drivers traveling east will experience more traffic, with queues backing up just beyond Mascher Street.

Drivers traveling on Front Street will experience decreased queuing.

Lehigh Ave and A Street

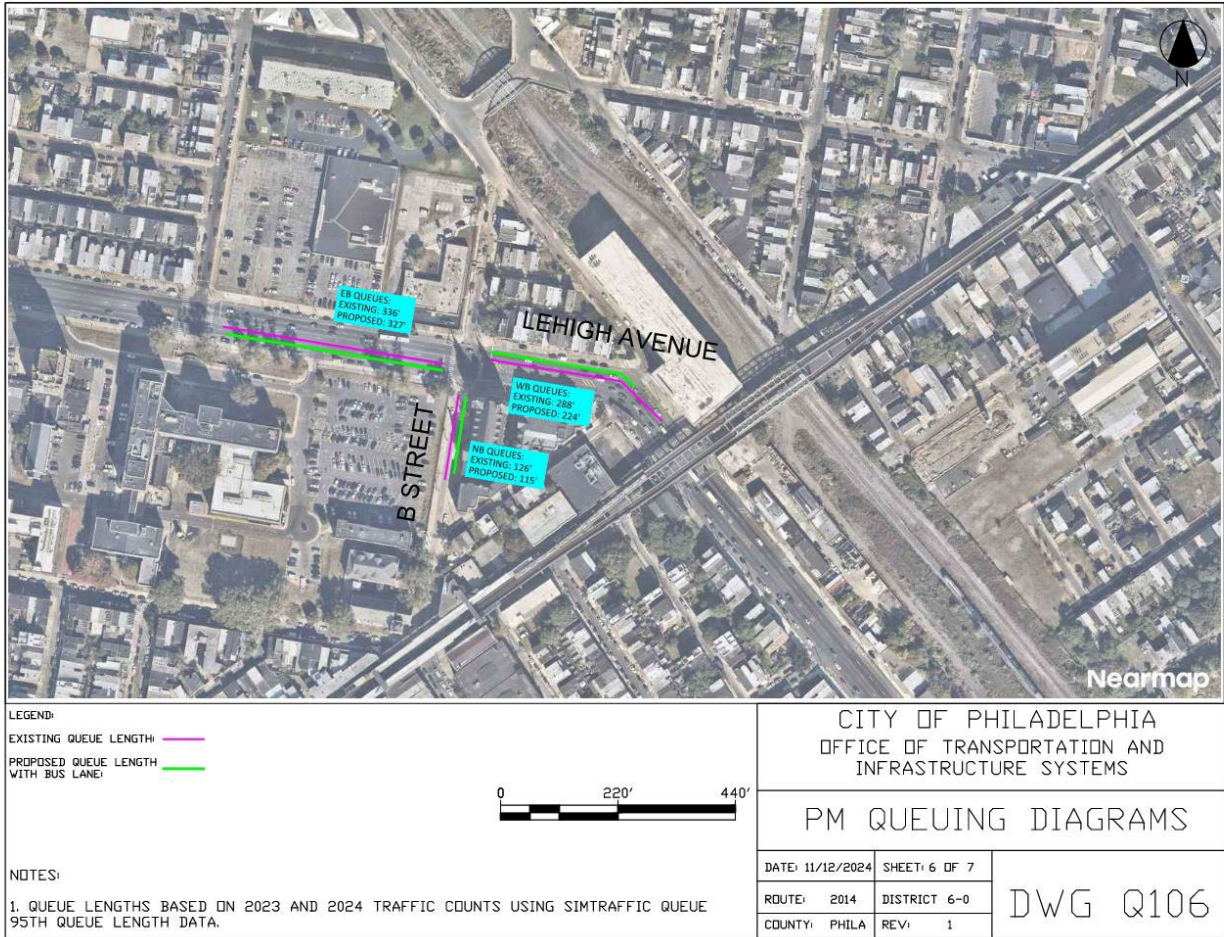


This diagram shows what our computer models predict the traffic experience will be like for drivers at a red light during evening rush hour (4pm-6pm) at the Lehigh and A intersection.

Drivers traveling west on Lehigh Avenue will experience similar traffic, but drivers traveling east will experience more traffic, with queues backing up just beyond Front Street. Eastbound drivers may have to wait through two light cycles to get through the intersection.

Drivers traveling on A Street will have a similar experience as existing.

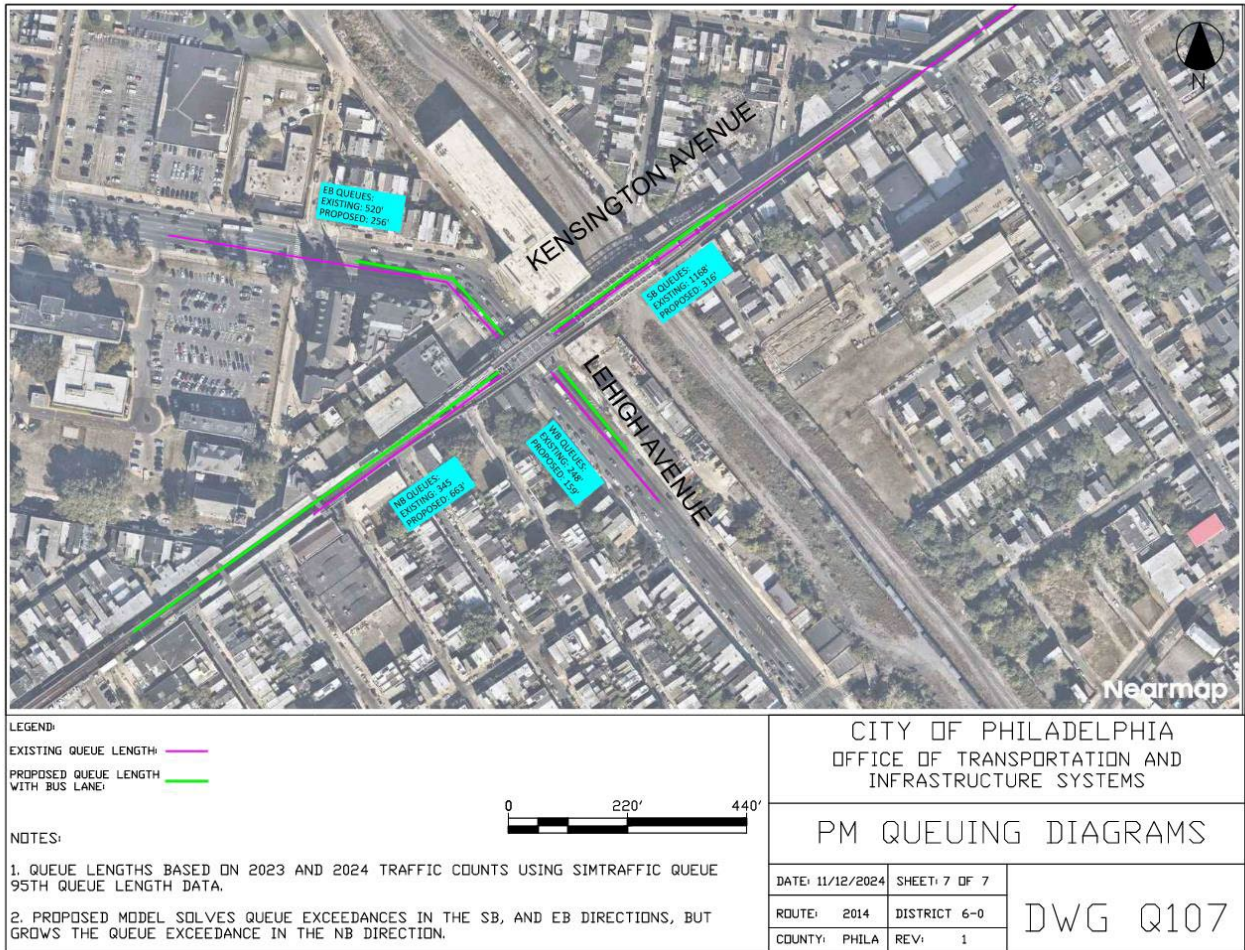
Lehigh Ave and B Street



This diagram shows what our computer models predict the traffic experience will be like for drivers at a red light during evening rush hour (4pm-6pm) at the Lehigh and B intersection.

Drivers in all directions at this intersection will experience similar if not reduced traffic at this intersection.

Lehigh Ave and Kensington Ave



This diagram shows what our computer models predict the traffic experience will be like for drivers at a red light during evening rush hour (4pm-6pm) at the Lehigh and Kensington intersection.

Drivers traveling east and west on American Street will experience less traffic and queuing.

Drivers traveling north on Kensington Avenue will experience increased traffic while drivers traveling south on Kensington Avenue will experience significantly less.