

2019/2020 Local Technical Assistance and Community Planning Programs

Application Number: 62

Project Title: Niles LeHigh Ave Corridor Plan

Applicant: Village of Niles



Project Description:

The Village of Niles is seeking CMAP's assistance with the development of a Lehigh Avenue Corridor Plan. This proposed Corridor Plan would be the next step in a progression of planning initiatives stemming from 2011's Niles 2030 Comprehensive Plan, from which the Village's lack of a "true downtown area" emerged as a key concern. That concern led to the creation of the Touhy Triangle Master Plan, which proposed to turn a small commercial-industrial area bound by Lehigh Avenue, Gross Point Road, and Touhy Avenue into a mixed-use town center, and introduced a concept for residential development based on the possibility of a new Metra Station. In 2018, the Village enlisted a team of consultants to conduct a feasibility study for a potential Metra Station on the MD-N tracks east of the Touhy Triangle. The study found that a Niles station would not only be feasible, but would have all of the criteria needed to be highly successful as both an important regional transit connection and catalyst for future economic development.

The Niles Metra Station Feasibility Study proposed locating the new station on Lehigh Avenue, about halfway between Howard St and Touhy Ave. The station area today is dominated by larger-scaled, automobile-oriented industrial and commercial land uses, with little to no regard for alternative modes of transportation. With a large number of employers in the surrounding area, the proposed station has great potential to be a reverse-commute destination; however concerns exist about last-mile connections for employees. Lehigh Avenue would be one of the most heavily used roadways by future Metra riders, yet today there is a total lack of sidewalks between Touhy and Oakton. The corridor is controlled and maintained by IDOT, and would need to be improved considerably in the future to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists.

With CMAP's assistance, we hope to conduct an extensive study of the existing conditions of the corridor and the greater half mile station area, examining sidewalks connections, parking and water infrastructure. Components of the Lehigh Avenue Corridor Plan will include bicycle and pedestrian accommodation and linkages, station area parking management and pricing, strategies for IDOT/jurisdictional coordination, local road safety, strategies for last-mile challenges, and best practices in corridor design to support future transit-oriented development. While the possibility of a Metra Station is the catalyst for this planning effort, we hope the Plan will provide improvements that will be implementable in regardless of development outcomes.

Links to relevant plans:

Comp Plan: <https://www.vniles.com/DocumentCenter/View/2464/2030-Comprehensive-Plan?bidId=>

Touhy Triangle: https://www.vniles.com/DocumentCenter/View/5499/Touhy-Triangle-Master-Plan-Report_11-9-2016?bidId=

Niles Metra Station Feasibility Study hasn't been publicly released yet.

Project Location: This project will be focused on Lehigh Avenue in Niles, from Howard Street to Touhy Avenue. It will also consider the half mile radius surrounding a proposed Metra Station at Jarvis Street and Lehigh Avenue.