



MORE PARK, LESS WAY:

AN ACTION PLAN TO INCREASE URBAN VIBRANCY ON THE BENJAMIN FRANKLIN PARKWAY

**TRAFFIC AND
TRANSPORTATION
ADDENDUM**

GOAL:

**ENSURE SAFE ACCESS
TO PARKS AND
INSTITUTIONS**

FOR
**PHILADELPHIA
PARKS AND
RECREATION**

PREPARED BY
**PENNPRAXIS,
SCHOOL OF DESIGN
UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA**

SUPPORTED BY
**THE PEW CHARITABLE
TRUSTS
THE LENFEST FOUNDATION**

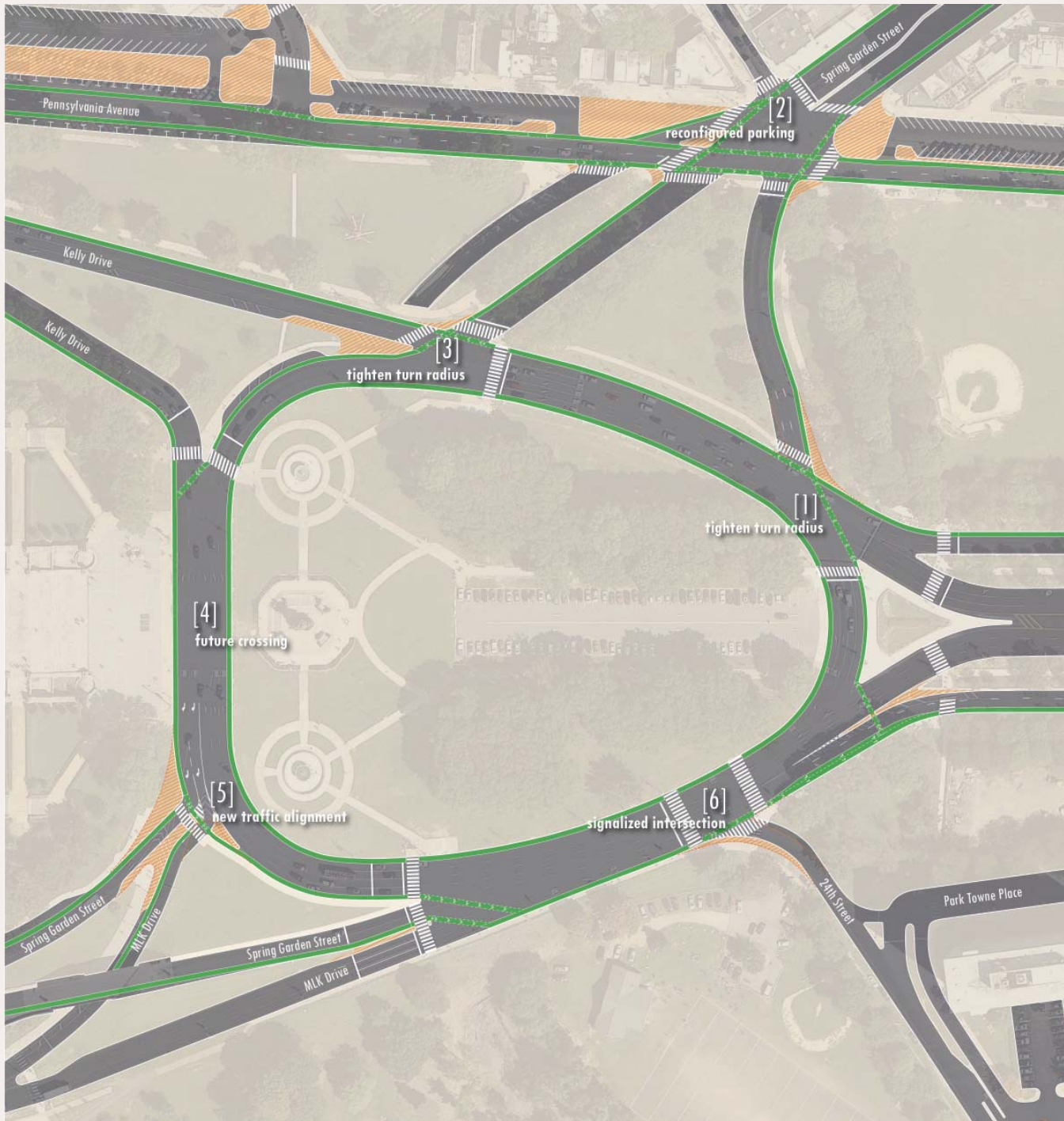
Without fail, every plan that touches the Parkway addresses the need for significant reconfiguration of roadways, revised vehicular circulation, and traffic calming interventions.¹ This action plan is no different. The approach in More Park, Less Way: An Action Plan to Increase Urban Vibrancy on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, centers on “pushing back” the boundary of the highway style design so it is closer to I-676 and I-76, and reclaiming surface intersections and streets as safe, multi-functional urban spaces that will transform the Parkway into a fully integrated component of the city’s urban fabric.

It is important to keep in mind that improving traffic around the Parkway is not without precedent. The 2005 Logan Square project and recently completed 2011 streetscape improvement project have successfully enhanced pedestrian conditions, had minimal impact on traffic capacity, and, most importantly, established a built-in framework for community buy-in. These recent projects serve as a foundation for the continued urbanization of the Benjamin Franklin Parkway.

Throughout the course of this project, PennPraxis and Parks and Recreation met with key city and non-profit stakeholders that have been intimately exploring traffic related improvements to the Parkway. These stakeholders include the Philadelphia City Planning Commission, Mayor’s Office of Transportation and Utilities, Philadelphia

Streets Department, Pennsylvania Environmental Council, Center City District, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

In this addendum, PennPraxis shares the more detailed recommendations for traffic and transportation improvements that will make significant strides in ensuring safe access to the parks and institutions that line the Parkway. The recommendations put forth represent both short- and long-term remedies for improving access and connectivity in and around the Parkway. Many of the recommendations reflect a degree of consensus between city agencies and non-profits while other recommendations reflect longer-term interventions that will require more detailed traffic studies and analysis before implementation.



EAKINS OVAL

Recommendations:

1. The plan proposes tightening the turn radius. The intent is to slow the traffic turning onto 23rd and continuing west along the Parkway. Tightening the turn radius at this intersection will encourage the re-urbanization of the district by making the intersection more pedestrian and bicycle friendly. This intervention helps to reclaim the intersection, creating a more safe, multi-functional urban space. This proposed intervention received support from all partners listed above.
2. Proposed interventions at the intersection of 23rd Street and Spring Garden Street include adjustments to the existing parking configuration along Pennsylvania Avenue, the extension of pedestrian refuge islands to help improve pedestrian accessibility across Pennsylvania Avenue, and improvements to the bicycle lane network that will set up connections with the East Coast Greenway.

The parking reconfiguration establishes dedicated parking corrals that will help manage parking and narrow

the crossing for pedestrians. The Center City District estimates that this parking redesign will increase parking from 361 to 457 spaces.² Although the final design may result in a less significant increase in parking, these improvements to Pennsylvania Avenue will help establish a more urban connection between the Parkway itself and the neighborhoods to the north.

The proposed bicycle improvements within this area have been designed by the Pennsylvania Environmental Council in consultation with the Streets Department and are moving forward to implementation.

The Planning Commission and Streets Department have acknowledged the fact that this intersection presents distinct challenges. The Streets Department has been exploring signal issues at this intersection as well as the concept of redesigning the entry into the tunnel in order to slow down traffic and encourage drivers to yield to pedestrians.

Any combination of improvements at this intersection will help to soften this edge of the Parkway and will help to ensure safe pedestrian access to the Parkway and nearby neighborhoods.

3. Tightening the turn where Spring Garden meets the Parkway and Kelly Drive combined with formalizing the painted bumpout at Kelly Drive will represent an important step in urbanizing this intersection. Formalizing the bumpout will create a pedestrian refuge, helping to improve the crossing experience. These proposed improvements were supported by each city agency consulted.

The proposed improvements to the bicycle network align with recent work completed by the Planning Commission with one exception. The Planning Commission proposes incorporating a “Copenhagen Turn” at the intersection of Spring Garden and Kelly Drive. The “Copenhagen Turn” serves as a landing area for cyclists and enables and smooth left turn.

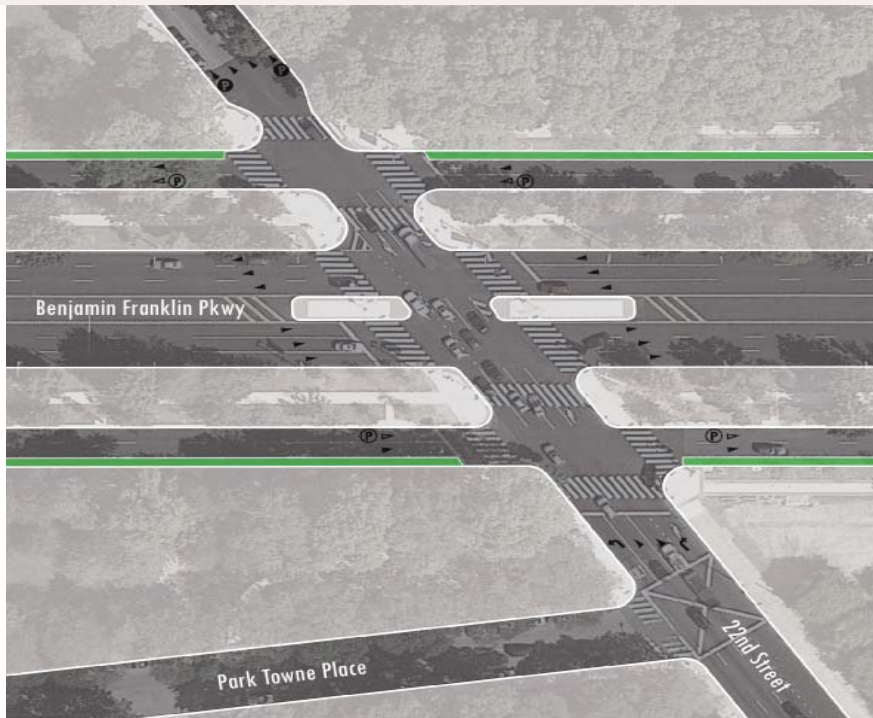
4. At the present time, this plan recommends maintaining the existing pedestrian crossing between Eakins Oval to the Rocky Statue. However, for the long-term, the ideal scenario would be to install a pedestrian crossing directly to the foot of the art museum steps. PennPraxis recognizes that more detailed traffic modeling is

necessary before implementation of this recommendation. The Planning Commission and Streets Department have been casually exploring more dramatic and expensive reconfigurations of Eakins Oval in order to take steps to address this issue. In the meantime, all parties agree that signage, pavement markings, and landscaping can serve to safely direct pedestrians from Eakins Oval to the Art Museum.

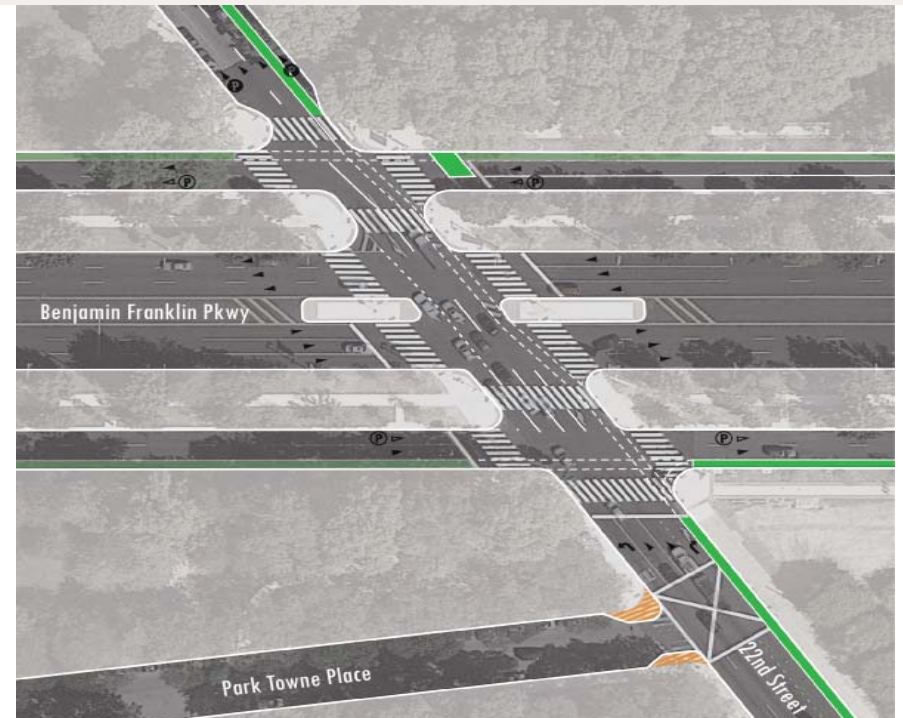
5. A new traffic alignment at the exit to Spring Garden Street and Martin Luther King Drive is intended to better organize vehicular traffic and better manage the weaving that currently occurs in this section of Eakins Oval. Additionally, the tightening of the turn radius would help to urbanize this intersection and lessen its role as a highway on-ramp.

City agencies have highlighted that the proposed intervention might be unsafe and result in rear-end crashes. City officials recommend modeling the potential for a signal at this intersection.

6. 24th Street currently serves as an on-ramp to the Vine Street Expressway. In an effort to calm traffic and provide improved connections to Eakins Oval, this proposal recommends signalizing the intersection, adding new crosswalks, narrowing the turn radius, installing a double wide bicycle lane to enable left hand turns around the Oval, and formalizing the existing painted bumpout to aid in pedestrian crossing at the eastern edge of the Oval. PennPraxis feels that signalizing this intersection is a critical step in establishing important connections to Eakins Oval. However, we do recognize that this proposed intervention is controversial and does require detailed traffic modeling. The implementation of signalization at this location represents a long-term solution that would make significant strides in re-urbanizing the Parkway and more fully integrating the Parkway into the fabric of the city.



EXISTING

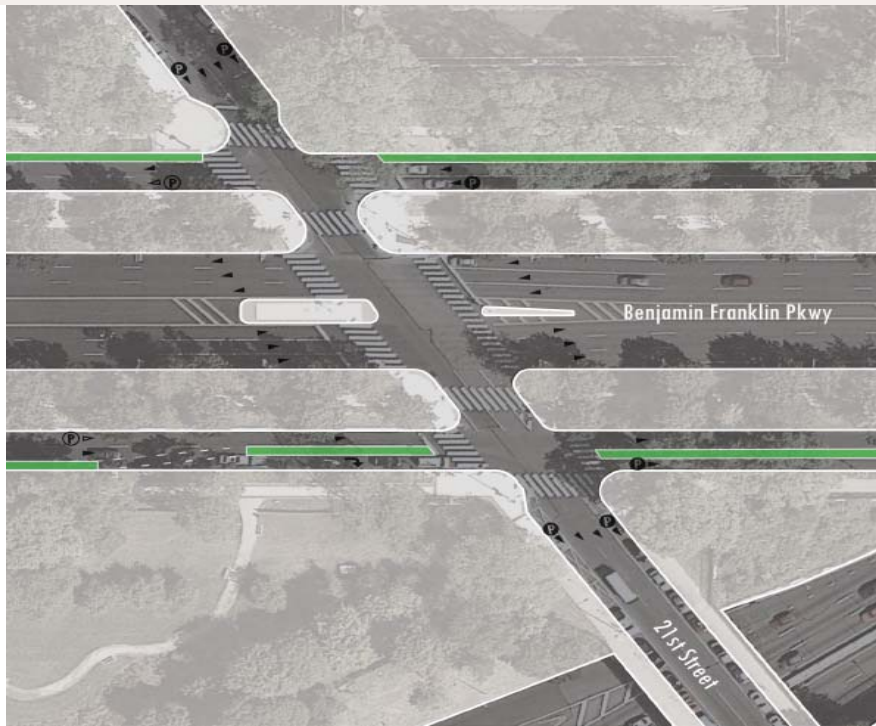


PROPOSED

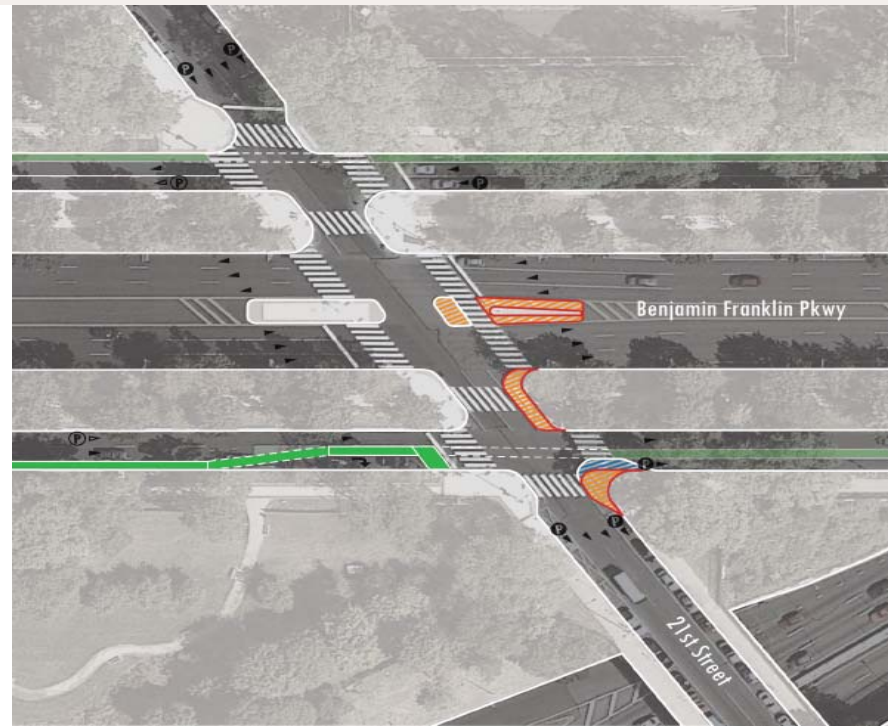
22ND STREET INTERSECTION

Recommendations:

The traffic and transportation recommendations at the 22nd Street intersection, center on improving bicycle safety and the north/south pedestrian connections. It is important to note that within the past few years the City has already begun to implement intersection improvements such as new bumpouts and enlarged pedestrian refuges. These interventions have dramatically improved access across the Parkway and have enhanced pedestrian safety. Moving forward, PennPraxis recommends concentrating on formalizing the bicycle network and supports the Planning Commission's goal of marking all signalized intersections with bike boxes.



EXISTING



PROPOSED

21ST STREET INTERSECTION

Recommendations:

In the coming years, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation will be investing in improvements along the Parkway between 21st Street and 20th Street. The project is estimated to be completed by 2017. This plan supports the proposed streetscape changes as they will help to improve pedestrian access across the Parkway and calm traffic. Some key interventions center on enlarging pedestrian refuges and bumpouts. Within this area of the Parkway, bicycle safety continues to be of concern. Again, in this location, formalizing the bicycle network and supporting the Planning Commission's goal of marking all signalized intersections with bike boxes will help realize an improved bicycle network.



CONCLUSION

The 2005 Logan Square project and recently completed 2011 streetscape improvement project have laid the groundwork for restoring the Parkway to a place that is hospitable to both pedestrians and vehicles. Moving forward, it is imperative that the City build upon these successes and address the accessibility issues that continue to define the character of the Parkway. Working to make the Parkway and its surrounding assets—parks, institutions, and neighborhoods—more accessible will enable the Parkway to become more fully integrated into the life of the city.



Endnotes

1. OLIN Partnership, Public Improvements and a New Design Framework for the Benjamin Franklin Parkway (2003); Kise Straw & Kolodner, Logan Square Neighborhood Parkway Plan (2009); Econsult in conjunction with JzTi, Wallace Roberts & Todd, and Portfolio Associates, Reconfiguring Key Intersections: Eakins Oval and Intersections of Kelly Drive/Pennsylvania Avenue/Fairmount Avenue/25th Street (2011); Wallace Roberts & Todd, Fairmount Community Plan (2003).
2. Center City District. "Presentation: Pennsylvania Avenue Redesign." Date Unknown.

Additional Interviews:

Meeting with Pennsylvania Environmental Council, July 19, 2012.

Meeting with Rina Cutler, Deputy Mayor. Mayor's Office of Transportation and Utilities, October 15, 2012.

Meeting with representatives from Mayor's Office of Transportation and Utilities, Streets Department, and Parks and Recreation, October 19, 2012.

Email Correspondence: Mayor's Office of Transportation and Utilities. Feedback on recommendations provided by Charles Carmalt. Dated October 26, 2012.

Email Correspondence: Planning Commission. Feedback on traffic recommendations provided by Deborah Schaaf. Dated December 17, 2012.

Photo Citations

Photographs in this report were taken by PennPraxis staff members Andrew Goodman, Bridget Keegan and Christine Lee with the exception of the following:

"Philly Phlash" and "Las Vegas Strip and Downtown Express." Courtesy of Frank Jaskiewicz of JzTI.

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