

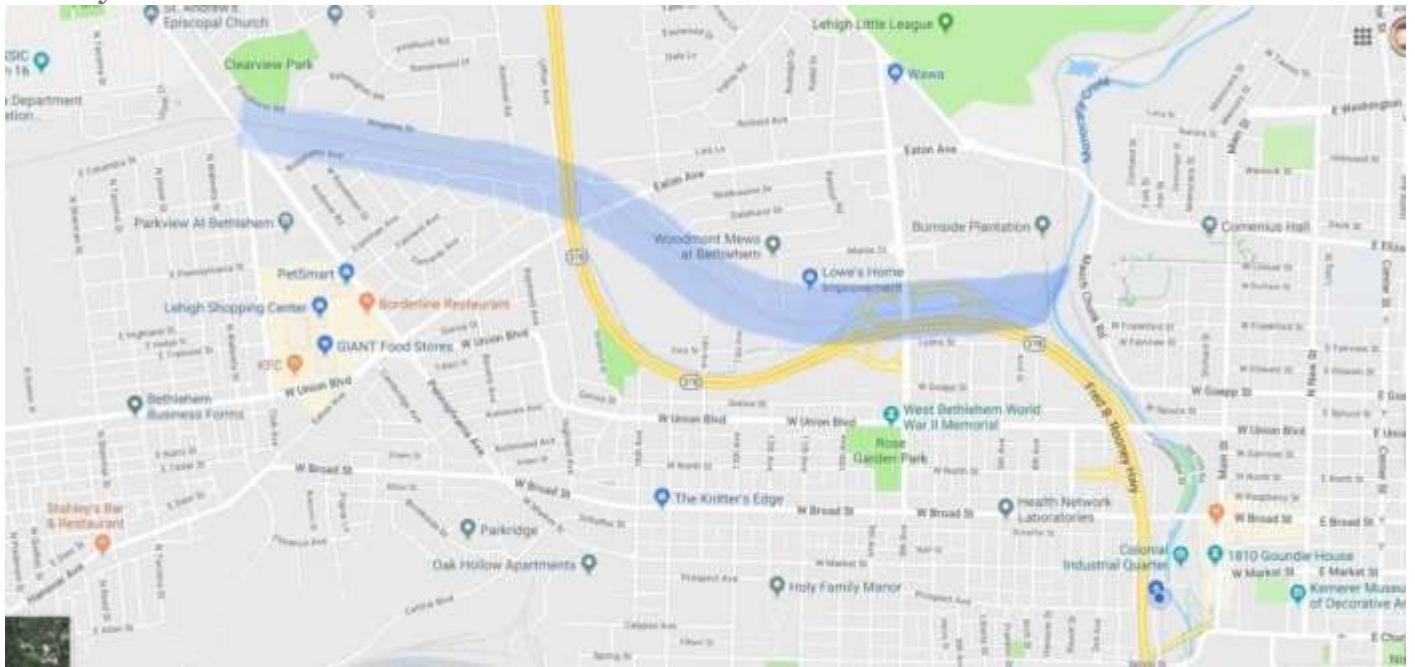
Extending Monocacy Way northwest (18)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Serious Issues, Walkability and Bikeability March 27, 2019

(18th in a series of posts on Walkability and Bikeability)

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Gadfly –



The old Lehigh and New England Railroad tracks branching off of Monocacy Way could be the next expansion of the Bethlehem trail system. It could connect Pennsylvania Avenue (think Queen's Nutritional Products) to Burnside Plantation and on to the Colonial Historical District and the D&L towpath trail.



Many readers will recognize this portion of the trail at Monocacy Way, Union Boulevard, and the Route 378 north onramp.



About a quarter-mile north, we see the branch of the old Lehigh and New England's Allentown line head off to the west. For reference, the dog is facing east. Burnside is visible through the trees.



As the track condition shows, the line is not active. It no longer serves the old Durkee's plant and never served the Lowe's. It passes under the Eighth Avenue overpass and roughly follows the (seasonal) west branch of Monocacy Creek. Action steps Lehigh County and the City of Bethlehem would need to take would be to have Norfolk Southern formally abandon the line and transfer possession to the same entity owning Monocacy Way. The parks department and streets bureau would need to determine access points along the new trail. Selecting property for the access points, noting that they'd need to be ADA accessible, would be the most expensive part of converting the rail line to public access.

While public focus is now on the pedestrian bridge, this stretch of land offers residents of northwest Bethlehem new and grade-free access to the heart of the city. Norfolk Southern has a foundation offering grants which might pay for some or all of the rail-to-trail conversion.

I've seen early plans from the 1970s when the American Parkway was being planned showing it following this line to a major interchange with Route 378 at Eighth Avenue. That will never happen. This could.

- John