Back-in parking and bike lanes

When Pottstown installed back-in angle parking on High Street in 2003, it was the first Pennsylvania municipality to do so.

Because High Street is a state road, the borough needed permission from PennDOT, which it granted as a demonstration project.

Back-in angle parking narrowed the street to one lane in each direction, slowing traffic and making it safer for pedestrians to cross High Street.

It added 93 parking spaces downtown, immediately adjacent to stores and offices, simply by making more efficient use of the existing street.

It also made room to add bike lanes on both sides of the street.

Numerous Pennsylvania municipalities have now added back-in angle parking, including Philadelphia, Conshohocken, Mt. Penn, Bethlehem, Lancaster, York, and Erie.

Major cities like New York and Washington have converted thousands of parking spaces to back-in, because it’s safer and creates room for more cars.

Pottstown is now in the vanguard among small towns for installing protected bike lanes (using plastic “delineators”) as well.

There are more than 100 American cities with protected bike lanes, including Pittsburgh and Philadelphia.

New York City has nearly 100 miles of protected bike lanes. Minneapolis has 15 miles, and Chicago has 25 miles.

People worry about plowing the street when it snows. Folks, it snows in Chicago, New York, Pittsburgh, and Minneapolis. A lot.

But Cassandras abound.

As former Montgomery County Commissioner Mike Marino often said, “You are always going to have challenges from people when you try to do something that is innovative, creative, worthwhile, and productive.”

Commentary by Thomas Hylton

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT — Two-way “cycle track” on Dearborn Street in Chicago; cycle track on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington; back-in angle parking on 100th Street in Manhattan; and back in angle parking on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington.