



BPAC Design & Infrastructure Subcommittee Meeting

May 25, 2022 9:50 am to 11:10 am

Online Zoom Meeting

Attendees:

- **Thom Stead, DVRPC, Chair**
- Anne Heasley, Sustainable Jersey
- Byron Nicholas, Hudson County
- Corey Hannigan, NV5
- Jacob Thompson, GMTMA
- Jeevanjot Singh, NJDOT
- Michael Dannemiller, Middlesex County
- Michael Popovech, Monmouth County
- Michael Viscardi, NJ Transit
- Mohammad Islam, NJDOT
- Sam Rosenthal, VTC
- Sean Meehan, VTC
- Sophia Pereira, VTC
- Tom DiBise, MBI
- Paul Mickiewicz, NJ Bike & Walk Coalition
- Polli Schildge, Complete Streets Asbury Park
- Nazhat Aboobaker, NJDOT

Meeting Notes:

Design Subcommittee and Policy Subcommittee Combined Meeting started at 9:50. **Corey Hannigan (NV5, formerly VTC)** presented information on proposed updates to the NJ Residential Site Improvement Standards.

- **Background**
 - What are [Residential Site Improvement Standards](#) (RSIS)?
 - N.J.A.C. 5:21
New Jersey Administrative Code > Title 5. Community Affairs > Chapter 21.
Residential Site Improvement Standards.
 - Statewide requirements for improvements made in connection with residential development, including water supply, sanitary sewers, streets and parking, and stormwater management.



- Intended to standardize requirements for residential subdivisions and site improvements, avoid unnecessary residential construction costs, streamline development application and approval processes, and separate policy decisions (of development review) from technical determinations.
- How does this impact us?
 - This impacts stormwater infrastructure, parking, bike lanes, lane widths, sidewalks requirements. This all connects to bigger topics of resiliency, sustainability, safety, access.
- This is in the context of the affordable housing shortage. President Biden announced [new actions](#) May 16, 2022 to ease the burden of housing costs.
 - “[addressing] state and local zoning and land use laws and regulations that limit housing density.”
 - “...encouraging locally driven land use reform, density, rural main street revitalization, and transit-oriented development.”
- State highways are no exception to these impacts. There is a wide range of residential properties along state highways which often lead to a conflict in land use that deserves more attention. Note: Many sites portrayed in the images are half a mile away from schools.
- Rural areas are no exception to these impacts. There are often no requirements for sidewalks or crosswalks at intersections. This proposes barriers to revitalizing rural main streets.
- Policy Connections
 - Safe Routes to School: Schools and design guidelines tend to reference RSIS as it is the main ordinance that controls sidewalk creation which is essential for children to be able to walk to school. Local municipalities often defer to the guidance referenced in RSIS and so local municipalities ultimately see these as best practices.
 - E.g. [New Jersey School Zone Design Guide](#) & [Bridgewater Township Pedestrian & Bicycle Travel Plan](#)
 - Complete Streets: Overlaps with RSIS as they both talk about sidewalks, lane width reductions, bike lanes, protected bike lanes, and bike parking. NJTPA announced last year that RSIS could be used to institutionalize Complete Streets.
 - Strategic Highway Safety Plan: Has a specific task team to update RSIS as part of their overall goal to reduce pedestrian and bike fatalities and injuries on public roads.
- Current Priorities
 - Housing is expanding at a rapid pace. We should ensure that land use and safety are part of the development process.



- As of now, RSIS are not aligned with current White House goals, but they continue to influence local ordinances and developments.
- The Sustainable Jersey Land Use and Transportation Task Force is considering changes to Residential Site Improvement Standards (and the MLUL) to enable Complete Streets.
- Active transportation helps us tackle the triple-crisis of road safety, climate change, and inflation.
- Currently RSIS regulations do the *opposite* – continuing to require motor vehicle infrastructure and treating safe walking and biking infrastructure as non-essential.

- **Approach**

- All Ages & Abilities Approach
 - Emphasize the importance of continuity of road infrastructure, e.g., “Pay attention to how new bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure connects to existing paths. Discontinuous, inconsistent infrastructure make travel confusing, frustrating, and dangerous for all road users.”
 - Instead of a hierarchy of road function, propose a hierarchy of protection/prioritization for vulnerable road users, e.g., pedestrian/wheelchair > non-motorized vehicles > transit > freight/emergency > personal vehicles.
 - Redefine Circulation Element in NJ law to reference [NJDOT Complete Streets Design Guide](#) (2017), instead of the FHWA functional hierarchy (arterial, collector, ...), which only includes vehicular circulation.
 - Connect to climate and safety goals, e.g., [New Jersey Climate Change Resilience Strategy](#) and [Strategic Highway Safety Plan](#).
 - Add language that infrastructure should follow directly from motorized vehicle design-speed and volume (i.e., expected “road-street”), e.g., [NACTO Guidelines](#).
- Bicycle Infrastructure Design Standards
 - Update references in RSIS to recognize current design best-practice documents such as NJDOT Complete Streets Guidelines (2017) and [NACTO Urban Bikeways Design Guide](#) (2014). Remove references to [NJDOT Bicycle Compatible Roadways and Bikeway Planning Design Guidelines](#) (1996) and seriously consider whether it is appropriate to include the new edition of the [AASHTO Guide to Developing Bicycle Facilities](#).
 - Recognize/authorize the use of municipal, county, or regional plans or Complete Streets policies, rather than only master plans, regarding bicycle fatalities.
- Consistent Terminology
 - Bicycle-related terms could be redefined or clarified to improve upon and specify current definitions:
 - *Bikeway* is the umbrella term for all bicycle-compatible rights-of-way.



- A *bicycle-compatible roadway* are either sharrows or a bicycle boulevard (i.e., not a bike lane but still specifically encouraging bikes).
 - A *bicycle lane* is a painted bike lane, and *bicycle path* is a separated or protected bike lane or trail.
 - If we keep these terms, we must be very diligent is using them correctly or we can redefine or consolidate the definitions to be more appropriate.
 - Also ensure roadway related language is general enough to apply to all relevant streets, not just “collectors and arterials.”
- **Specific Changes Proposed**
 - 5:21-4.1 Street Hierarchy
 - These figures seem arbitrary and are out of date.
 - The recently published 11th edition of the [ITE manual](#) have improved upon them, but it is very costly to acquire to confirm this. Perhaps someone at NJDOT could provide updated figures.
 - Should revise Table 4.2 to include non-motorized / pedestrian counts in addition to average daily “traffic,” or strike it entirely, e.g., “multifamily access cul-de-sac” generating 4x the car traffic of transportation mode, does not account for location. The data in this column is doing more harm than good.
 - 5:21-4.2 Cartway Width, 5:21-4.3 Curbs or Curbs and Gutters, and 5:21-4.4 Shoulders
 - Should ensure that the words *street* and *bikeway* are used. We want to have the most general definitions as possible.
 - Add in “regional, county, or municipal plan or Complete Streets policy” to create space for as many guidelines and best practices as possible.
 - 5:21-4.5 Sidewalks and Graded Areas
 - There is a mention of rural areas or low-density areas where sidewalks aren’t required on both sides of the streets. Should sidewalks not always be required? How are “low density”, “rural”, “high-density” defined? Are they appropriate definitions?
 - 5:21-4.6 Bikeways
 - Removing language such as “only if such paths” could allow for flexibility and RSIS should reference updated guidelines.
 - 5:21-4.18 Sidewalks and Bikeways Construction Standards
 - Reference updated and recent version of guidelines.
 - 5:21-7.1 Stormwater Management: Scope
 - “Nonstructural stormwater management strategies” likely doesn’t include green/grey infrastructure like gardens, bioswales, green roofs, cisterns, permeable pavement, etc.
 - This should be investigated so that stormwater management is maximized. It should consider the White House’s guidelines and [NACTO Stormwater Design Guidelines](#).



- 5:21-7.4 Inlets, Catch Basins, Manholes, and Outlets
 - Bicycle-safe grates should be standardized and used universally, whether there is bicycle traffic or not.
- **Next Steps**
 - Obtain information on the process to submit proposed changes to the advisory board agenda through the NJ Department of Community Affairs.
 - Connect with a champion within the RSIS board.
 - Determine who needs to propose the changes.
 - Developer? Municipality representative? Planner?
 - Finalize changes to be proposed. Draft wording?
 - For reference: [NJ Department of Community Affairs – Residential Site Improvement Standards.](#)

Comments on proposed updates to the NJ Residential Site Improvement Standards.

- RSIS plays a big part in what is created in the built environment. Many planners have run into existing RSIS regulations that are obstacles to implementing Complete Streets.
- Is there a way to reference the best/most recent version of guidelines without specifying the year so changes won't have to be made so frequently? RSIS does not do this now.
- Barriers we face include:
 1. Are these all of the proposed changes we could make? We should take a closer look.
 2. Who can propose these changes? It needs to be a developer, municipal representative, or someone else who works with RSIS. This falls under a lobbying category so it is not a role BPAC can play. Stories that explain why these changes are so important should be collected for whomever proposes the changes.
 3. What is the scope? How much do we want to try to accomplish? What “fights” do we want to engage in (e.g., eliminating parking requirements)?
 4. What language should we use/propose?
 5. [The Strategic Highway Safety Plan](#) includes updates to RSIS as a proposed action in the Pedestrian and Bicycle Emphasis Area but it is not one of the priority actions and it has not been addressed yet. Although statewide, the SHSP does not advocate for or mention anything about changes to law. That is not within the scope of the plan.
 6. What is the RSIS impact on the [New Jersey Highway Access Management Code](#), which is law? We need to consider the perspectives of and impacts on developers, planners, etc. and determine how to present proposed changes. Try to avoid strictly defining things like low- and high-density, and ensure flexibility.
- NJ Future is asking the administration and state agencies to pay as much attention to reducing vehicle miles traveled as they pay to electrifying the vehicle fleet as part of the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plan. Part of that is making non-driving options safer. There is a draft of an executive



order that NJ Future would like signed, but the RSIS is not really included because there was no awareness of how it influences local street design. Would efforts be better directed to DCA?

- What happens in a mixed-use environment? Is it still subject to RSIS? Yes, though exceptions are often granted (this is a generalized statement).
- Are we recommending changes to the off-street parking requirements? There is a suggested recommendation to eliminate all parking requirements as part of the RSIS.
- Sidewalk requirements for suburban rural areas should include the flexibility of building a shared-use path if it makes sense for that location.
- The health benefits of walking and biking in lower-income communities should be part of this conversation.
- Stormwater management is hindered by RSIS unless a specific application is made to DCA.
- Bicycle-safe grates are a requirement of a stormwater permit. The municipality needs to replace them over time. There is a separate set of rules alongside RSIS that refers to bicycle-safe grates.
- We see communities making a lot of exceptions. This may signify that the standards need to be re-reviewed and revised. Numbers included in RSIS are also bound to change and should be updated frequently.
- There is a proposed development in Asbury Park, NJ with a lot of single-family dwellings. The development could go up to the right-of-way line, taking away the sidewalks etc. The presentation on RSIS could prove helpful as this development is discussed in Asbury.
- There is an argument that RSIS limits municipalities' ability to require green infrastructure on residential development projects above the minimum state requirement. Can this be an area of exploration?

If anyone would like to join a sub-subcommittee to take this discussion of RSIS to the next step, please contact [Leigh Ann Von Hagen](#). Presentation slides can be found on the BPAC webpage on the NJ Bicycle and Pedestrian Resource Center website.

Design Subcommittee Meeting started at 10:35.

- **Updates**
 - Middlesex County is developing a strategic plan called [Destination 2040](#) with action plans. One of these actions plans is a right-of-way plan that Rutgers is assisting with. Middlesex County is working to ensure that the Bike Easy Walk Safely Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan aligns with the right-of-way plan, strategic investment plan, etc.
 - NJ Bike & Walk Coalition: What experience do people have conducting demonstration projects and what lessons can be learned and shared?
 - DVRPC has a program called [EXPO](#) (Experimental Pop-Ups). Some projects that have taken place in New Jersey include Collingswood, with an advisory bike lane and improvements to crossings at busy intersections, and Camden, with parking-protected bike lanes and safety-related changes.



- Help to develop NJDOT-approved guidance for bicycle facilities at interchanges.
 - VTC did a good study on this several years ago.
 - DVRPC did a study for their Pennsylvania counties and is working with NJDOT and Mercer County to develop one for New Jersey. This is likely to start in summer 2022 as a partnership between NJDOT, the MPOs, and BPAC.
 - Investigate ITS/smart solutions for bicycle and pedestrian safety, i.e., speed sensors at pedestrian crossings, connected technology applied as systemic solutions, and wrong way driving alerts. Identify best practices to include in projects.
 - Clarify Complete Streets goals as they relate to Vision Zero.
 - Improve equity in bicycle and pedestrian safety projects.
 - Expand trail-related work, including promoting trail towns, improving safety at trail crossings, and exploring ADA compliance for multi-use trails.
 - Promote last-mile bicycle facilities to transit.
 - Explore infrastructure and signal timing solutions to reduce pedestrian exposure time.
- What would we like to explore for the next session?
 - A lot of these priorities are geared towards NJDOT. How do we engage the counties in this effort?
 - How can we assist municipalities with getting developers to provide bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in new developments?
 - We need to discourage drivers from shifting to local streets when we install bicycle and pedestrian accommodations and traffic calming on state/county roads.
 - Updates to New Jersey's Access Management Code should be investigated.