



**Design and Infrastructure BPAC Subcommittee Meeting  
September 15, 2021 10:30am to 11:25am  
Online Zoom Meeting**

**Attendees:**

**State/Regional**

Jeevan Singh – NJDOT  
Betsy Mastaglio – DVRPC  
Keith Hamas – NJTPA  
Mike Viscardi – NJT  
George Klevorn – NJT  
Aashna Jain – VTC  
Corey Hannigan – VTC

**County/Municipal**

Liza Betz – Union County Bureau of  
Transportation Planning

**Private**

Mike Dannemiller – NV5  
Peter Kremer – Michael Baker

Betsy Mastaglio introduced the session and welcomed everyone.

Mike Dannemiller provided an overview of two projects receiving assistance from the NJDOT Local Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Assistance Program.

- The first project was Elephant Swamp Trail in South Jersey.
  - The project is affiliated with the Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia and there will be an in-person ride along the trail led by John Boyle on September 25<sup>th</sup>.
  - It's a gravel trail along an old rail corridor.
  - The project team pursued three major improvement concepts:
    - Improving trail access
      - It is a quality trail with a surface of crushed stone but locals tend to keep it a secret. There is only one sign.
      - The project team conducted research and discovered that people wanted better wayfinding, improved surfaces and protection at road crossings.
        - They suggested adding a panel with trail information to an existing sign at the Elk Township Recreational Park
        - There was a shared use path network through this park, but it didn't lead to the trailhead so the team suggested putting up an information kiosk and providing actual connections.
        - The project team also provided guidance on trail surfaces and roadway crossing improvements.
  - Questions
    - Betsy asked how to apply for and/or secure local planning assistance (regarding a missing connection in Palmyra Borough).



- Mike responded that NV5 is mainly on the receiving end of that process, and perhaps Elise is a better person to ask, but he added that the program is competitive. NJDOT wants to prioritize studies in underserved communities as well as in places that show the intent to follow-through.
    - Metuchen has demonstrated this commitment. They have been “going like gangbusters” with bike lanes. They identified what they could control at the municipal level and pushed forward.
      - Betsy asked about the cost estimate for the trail.
        - Mike answered \$2.6 million, with \$1.5 million spent on trail surface and accessibility alone. He said that trails can be built so that they are more resilient to storms but even the poster-child of trails, the D&R Canal Towpath, was really damaged by recent floods.
- The second project was the Burlington-Camden Connector outside of Trenton.
  - This is intended to be a “Rail-with-Trail” along a rail corridor connecting to Camden.
  - Rails-To-Trails had done a satellite level analysis to identify this as a desirable project.
  - There were varying conditions along the ROW, including an active rail line.
  - Only one segment had environmental issues requiring expensive intervention because of wetlands.
  - Mike provided renderings of potential configurations, including an elevated boardwalk section.
  - Estimated cost was \$13.2 million, mainly due to the elevated segment.
  - Mike pointed out that in one instance a train company was happy to hear that they could use these trails for employee activities.
  - Elizabeth Betz asked about the railroad’s policy with regards to sharing the right of way.
    - Mike Viscardi responded that Class-1 freight railroads are generally not interested in having trails near active high-speed tracks, so a trail along a freight line might be possible but probably not one along a passenger rail line.
    - George Klevorn added that Class-1 freight railroads are generally against any trails on their ROW. Their main concern is that debris from the tracks might hit cyclists and expensive insurance policies would be required.
      - Mike Dannemiller suggested taking railroad staff out to look at the site in order to help them envision what was being proposed.
      - George Klevorn responded that Class-1s are federally regulated. He said that, in general, they are private corporations not so much interested in what the States want to do, particularly if it might put profits at risk.
      - Mike offered that perhaps we could make the argument that offering an alternative path could lower the risk of pedestrian trespassing-related fatalities.
      - Elizabeth Betz suggested that since this has been an issue for a while, maybe BPAC can keep the discussion going to see if a future resolution is possible.



- Corey Hannigan asked if people thought the \$13.2 million estimated price tag was a dealbreaker or if it might have a chance. Who is the main sponsor of the project?
  - Mike Dannemiller answered that it may be worth appealing to USDOT and Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg. There may be more funding coming through the pipeline with the pending infrastructure bill.
- George Klevorn provided links to CSX's and NS's Public Project Manuals:
  - <https://www.csx.com/index.cfm/library/files/about-us/property/public-project-manual/>
  - [http://www.nscorp.com/content/dam/nscorp/ship/shipping-tools/Public\\_Projects\\_Manual.pdf](http://www.nscorp.com/content/dam/nscorp/ship/shipping-tools/Public_Projects_Manual.pdf)
- Jeevan Singh asked if we have a mode shift model for bicycles, specifically any Discrete Choice Models.
  - Mike Dannemiller answered that he believed we are poised to provide great data on the impact of all these bike projects but that someone needs to take the lead.
  - Keith Hamas asked if there was any kind of priority list of these kinds of trail segments statewide. Is anyone tracking those inventories or criteria for analyzing mode-shift?
  - Mike mentioned that NJTPA had discussed this with DVRPC.
    - Betsy Mastaglio answered that it's an ongoing process.
    - Mike emphasized the importance of hard data at the statewide level to demonstrate the concrete benefits like crash-reduction, etc. NJTPA has good modeling available. SJTPO has been building like gangbusters. Maybe we could start by combining these regional bike trail networks. We just need to figure out who is doing what.
    - Keith agreed the available data is lacking, but there isn't a clear answer. We need to discuss further.
    - Betsy said that they are already starting to do estimates, before/after counts, etc. This is particularly useful for longer-term projects so they can see the real context and changes on the ground. It's unclear how that gets applied at the state level, but it's a start.
    - Mike added that the SHSP is also connected to this. If we care about Vision Zero and crash reduction, we should push for a shift away from LOS and towards safety. What you measure matters. We need to track crashes and injuries along with mode shift.
    - Pete Kremer chimed in that the existing models aren't built for the data we are talking about. The focus does need to be on safety, crash risk, and exposure of bikes/peds. We can demonstrate that people don't want to be on the roads. Traffic models show that the mode shift count is not going to be dramatic. Improving mobility and safety and healthy lifestyles is really going to be the selling point.
    - Aashna followed up with a link to a document from Smart Growth America showing the carbon output saved from these shifts: <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/cs-climate.pdf>



- Betsy tentatively suggested that the design subcommittee could take charge of this initiative. She asked DOT how BPAC could support the mission, and they did ask for counts, although they didn't specify further. Perhaps the design committee could define what data is most useful, and do inventories of bike lanes at bus stops, a review of interim materials (e.g. commenting on DOT projects brought to us) and a study of bike lanes at interchanges. If this conversation is important enough, maybe we can do some work on that and then report back to DOT and BPAC.
  - Mike emphasized that it all depends on who is willing to step up and lead. We need quantifiable data to justify projects. Correlation with crash-reduction can be big. On the politics side, it "saves voters' lives"
  - Pete followed up on a point regarding the BPAC restructuring and the need for a workplan for next year to be aligned with the SHSP. He suggested he and Mike could brainstorm that how to get that into the budget.
  - Jeevan mentioned equity, and the question of how we can provide for bicycles and pedestrians, particularly those who use bikes for work. How do we make those daily trips safe and viable transportation? Or are our projects hindering that? Also, In the meantime, it would also be helpful if all the safety stakeholders should make every effort to include comments with Proven Safety Countermeasures into ALL projects. We are all part of the SHSP and it is on us to make sure those comments are made in the process of scoping, core group, public outreach meetings, then we are not being good safety activists.
  - Elizabeth Betz mentioned that there are a lot of projects designed in recent years, where it is relatively easy to get funding and support for repaving or other road-related projects. It is not so easy to secure funding if you want to implement bicycle, pedestrian or scooter infrastructure, despite it being less costly, all things the same. There are different requirements, and different levels of competitiveness. But many communities have very limited budgets. This has been a problem for a very long time, and it's something to consider.
    - Jeevan said she would point those people to the MPO, who has the control over those matters.

The meeting closed automatically as everyone was redirected to the online general meeting room.