



# New Jersey Ambassadors in Motion 2021 Summary Report



## Acknowledgements

The New Jersey Bicycle and Pedestrian Resource Center (NJBPRC), supported by the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT), assists public officials, transportation and health professionals, and the public in creating a safer and more accessible environments for people to walk, bike, or travel by other wheeled devices. The NJBPRC supports the Department of Transportation through primary research, education, and dissemination of information about best practices in policy and design.

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# 1. Introduction

## Background

The New Jersey Ambassadors in Motion program (NJAIM) is administered by the New Jersey Bicycle and Pedestrian Resource Center (NJ BPRC), which is part of the Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. The program’s overall mission is to promote safe, active transportation throughout the state.

Each year, thousands of pedestrians and bicyclists are injured, and hundreds are killed in collisions with motor vehicles on New Jersey roadways. With a pedestrian fatality rate consistently higher than the national average, New Jersey has historically been designated by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) as a Pedestrian Safety Focus State (Figure 1), with Newark, NJ designated as a Pedestrian Safety Focus City. However, this has changed as of October 20, 2021 due to an updated selection process, and New Jersey is no longer considered a Focus State.<sup>2</sup>

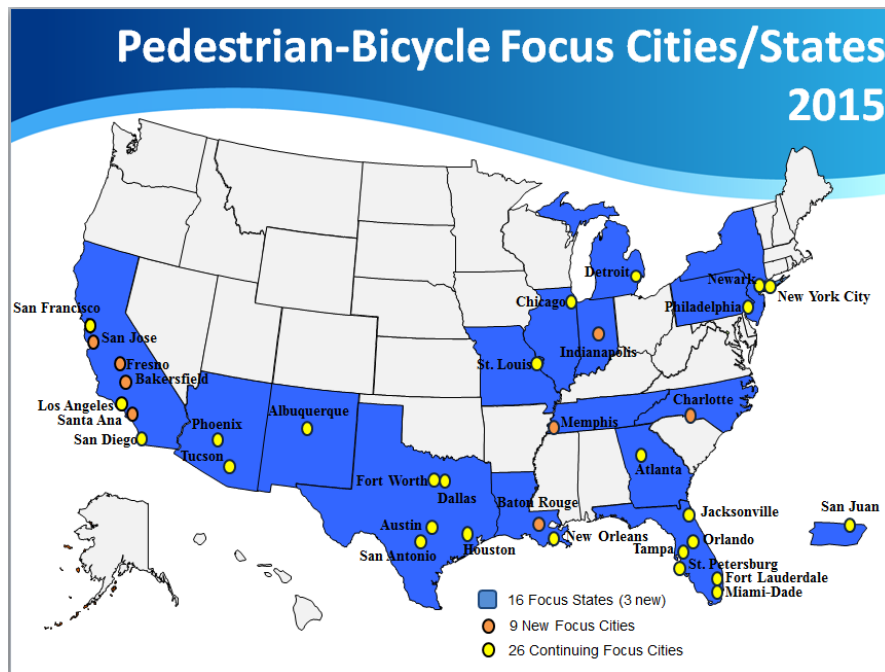


Figure 1. FHWA Pedestrian-Bicycle Focus Cities/States 2015 Map<sup>1</sup>

Nonetheless, pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities continued to rise in New Jersey (see Table 1).

	2019	2020	2021
<b>DRIVER</b>	289	304	369
<b>PASSENGER</b>	81	86	85
<b>PEDALCYCLIST</b>	12	18	26
<b>PEDESTRIAN</b>	176	179	221
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>558</b>	<b>587</b>	<b>701</b>

Table 1. NJ road fatalities by victim classification<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> FHWA. (2015). Pedestrian-Bicycle Focus Cities/States 2015. FHWA – Safety.

[https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped\\_bike/ped\\_focus/focus\\_cities\\_states2015.cfm](https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/ped_focus/focus_cities_states2015.cfm)

<sup>2</sup> Griffith, M. S. (2021). 2021 Update to Focused Approach to Safety. FHWA – Safety. [https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/fas/docs/fas\\_memo\\_oct2021.pdf](https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/fas/docs/fas_memo_oct2021.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> New Jersey State Police (NJSP). (2021). Year to Date - Statewide Fatal Crash Statistics for December 31, 2021. Trenton, NJ: New Jersey State Police, Fatal Accident Investigation Unit. Downloaded 02/15/2022.



These numbers suggest a strong and urgent need to continue to improve pedestrian and bicyclist infrastructure across the state, to make motorists aware of their role in the safety of other road users and to educate people who walk, bike or use other micromobility options to get around on how to travel safely. NJAIM helps advance this effort.

## Objective

The objective of this 2021 Summary Report is to provide an overview of the New Jersey Ambassadors in Motion program and an in-depth look into its outreach activities and accomplishments. This report will also set performance baselines and make recommendations for the 2022 season, which will commence in April and end in November.

## Challenges

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the first events of 2021 were held in July. The program received fewer requests than it had in past years, and indoor events like library presentations were not possible. Due to changing rules in New Jersey municipalities, planning was difficult. Bike rodeo attendance fell and maintaining NJAIM staffing levels was difficult. Activities like intercept surveys were not held until November. Instead, staff time was re-allocated to the Complete Streets Summit and other tasks related to the Strategic Highway Safety Plan.



Figure 2: Bike Rodeo in North Brunswick, NJ

## 2. Overview of the Ambassadors in Motion Program

The New Jersey Ambassadors in Motion program (NJAIM) has been in operation since 2014.

### Program Goals

Ambassadors serve as the NJ BPRC's public outreach team. To fulfill the program's mission, Ambassadors strive to achieve five goals:

1. Promote a culture of courtesy, acceptance, and safety for all transportation modes.
2. Strengthen and leverage a network of community organizations and leaders who can advocate on behalf of safe bicycling and pedestrian activity in their communities.
3. Provide training and education that helps to transform places and behaviors.
4. Encourage non-motorized transportation as a viable alternative to motorized transport.
5. Encourage everyday safe practices and behaviors by all travel modes—motorists, bicyclists, micromobility users, and pedestrians.

A primary way to accomplish these goals is to educate all people who travel, no matter how they get around. Trained Ambassadors perform three types of outreach: events and in-class lessons, municipal/county/governmental assistance, and on-street outreach.



Figure 3. Bike Rodeo in South Bound Brook, NJ

## Ambassador Activities

Due to the ongoing pandemic, the NJ BPRC implemented two out of the three forms of the AIM program's typical outreach: events/lessons and municipal/governmental assistance. As part of these efforts, ambassadors worked to build relationships with New Jersey counties and local governments and mobilized to attend community events on an "on-call" basis.

## Campaigns and Messages

Well-planned and executed campaigns and messages are critical to the success of the program. In 2021, its seventh year, the program focused on the following topics:

- promoting active transportation for children,
- teaching bicycle and pedestrian safety for children and adults, and
- connecting the public to bicycle and pedestrian resources.

This proved difficult as ambassadors were not able to work with the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) and the StreetSmart NJ Campaign to distribute information on pedestrian and bicyclist safety as they had in previous years.

## Target Audience and Locations

Ambassadors traveled to several locations to promote safety on New Jersey roads. For event and in-class outreach, they traveled to New Brunswick, South Bound Brook, Edison, East Brunswick, North Brunswick, Piscataway, Jamesburg, Perth Amboy, and Spotswood.



Figure 4. Bike Rodeo in East Brunswick, NJ

## 3. NJAIM Activities

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### Ambassadors

The Voorhees Transportation Center employs Rutgers students to serve as NJ Ambassadors in Motion. Master's degree students who are familiar with or interested in bicycle and pedestrian planning are prioritized. Several of the ambassadors are avid bicyclists and many are multi-modal commuters to and from school and work. Rutgers University classes were taught remotely during the Spring 2021 semester and NJ BPRC was unable to recruit new student ambassadors for in-person outreach until summer.

### Event outreach

To reach a larger number of pedestrians and bicyclists, ambassadors worked with New Jersey's eight Transportation Management Associations (TMAs) at several events, including bike rodeos and intercept surveys. Ambassadors typically explained New Jersey rules of the road relating to bicyclists and pedestrians, fitted children for helmets, and answered questions about safety. This year, ambassadors reached hundreds of people through a variety of events, most of which were geared towards elementary school aged children.

2021 events included:

**South Bound Brook “National Night Out” Bike Rodeo:** Ambassadors worked with Keep Middlesex Moving (KMM) to facilitate a bike rodeo in conjunction with a local police-led “National Night Out” event in South Bound Brook. The rodeo attracted 5 children, as well as 2 teens and 4 adults. Ambassadors fitted and distributed 19 helmets.

**Edison Bike Rodeo:** In Edison, ambassadors worked with KMM and the Edison Police Department to conduct a bike rodeo for 20 people, including 17 children. The event was conducted along a park trail instead of a parking lot. Additional organizations that participated included a local non-profit, New Brunswick Bike Exchange, and Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJ-UH). RWJ-UH fitted and handed out helmets and the Bike Exchange helped children with filling their tires with air and other repair services. A raffle was held to give bikes away to participants.

**East Brunswick Bike Rodeo:** In East Brunswick, ambassadors worked with KMM, scout troops, and a local non-profit to conduct a bike rodeo for roughly 50 attendees. The event occurred in a mall parking lot and a bike raffle was held.

**North Brunswick Bike Rodeo:** In North Brunswick, ambassadors worked with KMM, representatives from Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital, the North Brunswick Police Department, and other organizations to conduct a rodeo for 68 children and 80 parents. Sixty helmets were fitted and distributed, participants' bicycles were checked, and they were given clip-on lights and other accessories. It was suggested by attendees that KMM and NJAIM should try to keep the momentum going by planning a group ride to key points in the neighborhood in order to demonstrate the practicality of bicycles for everyday transportation.





## Municipal / Government Outreach and Technical Assistance

One of the program's goals is to strengthen and leverage a network of community organizations and leaders who can advocate on behalf of safe bicycling and pedestrian activity in their communities. Outreach and technical assistance to municipal and county governments is thus critical to the success of the program. In past years, NJAIM invested resources to help several communities draft and adopt Complete Streets policies. NJAIM also participated in road safety audits as subject matter experts. In 2021, NJAIM provided support to Middlesex County as part of community bicycle and pedestrian surveys and bike audits.

**Piscataway Intercept Survey and Bike Audit:** Ambassadors joined county representatives and urban designers on a bicycling and walking survey of the area. They walked and rode in groups and noted the quality of walking and cycling infrastructure for each leg of the trip. Comments were shared among the groups regarding safety issues and suggested improvements. Where possible, local pedestrians were interviewed as part of intercept surveys.

**Perth Amboy Intercept Survey and Bike Audit:** Ambassadors conducted intercept surveys along Smith Street in downtown Perth Amboy asking people about their experiences as a pedestrian. One student ambassador contributed expertise during an on-bike audit.

**Spotswood/Jamesburg Intercept Survey and Bike Audit:** Ambassadors joined county and NJDOT representatives to survey local streets by bicycle and take note of infrastructure quality and perceived safety. Comments were shared among the groups and recorded for future analysis. Outreach was also conducted along a retail corridor in Jamesburg (via Helmetta). One student ambassador contributed expertise during an on-bike audit.

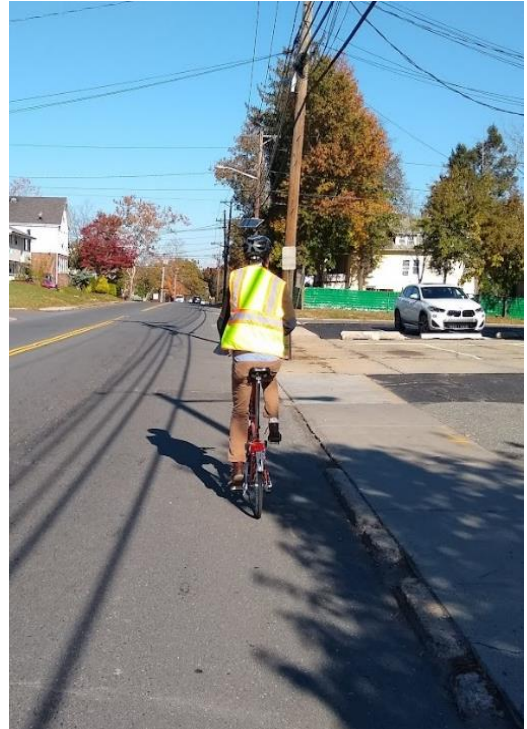


Figure 5: Bicycle Intercept Survey in Piscataway, NJ

## Photography

Ambassadors photographed intersections and streets with pedestrian and bicyclist activity, safety and access issues, bicycle lanes, and other Complete Streets infrastructure. The images that were collected will be added to the New Jersey Bicycle and Pedestrian Resource Center Image Library and can be used for future Complete Streets Workshops to demonstrate good design and to illustrate areas for improvement.

## 4. Performance Measures

NJAIM measures program performance by the number of persons educated through events and outreach. The following sections identify the number of events that occurred, the number of people educated, and the weighted number of people educated throughout 2021.

### Data Collection and Analysis Methodology

To obtain the data to evaluate performance and measure the success of the program, ambassadors were required to complete an evaluation form after each outreach event. Forms included information about the number of people who were surveyed, received literature, were given lessons, and/or were fitted with a helmet. These forms also included information about the weather and ideas for improving events. This data provides a quantifiable way to evaluate the success of each outreach event and the growth of the program in coming years. The total number of people contacted was measured by counting each person surveyed on the street and each participant at bicycle events.

Table 2: Number and Types of Outreach Events (note: Due to the ongoing pandemic, fewer events were held in 2021.)

Form of Outreach	Number of Events	Total Number of Persons Contacted
Event	4	229
On-Street	3	50
Total	7	279



Figure 6: Bike Rodeo in North Brunswick, NJ

## 5. Lessons Learned

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### 1. Administrative resiliency

Challenge: Due to the ongoing pandemic, NJAIM activities did not begin until the summer of 2021. Ambassador recruitment was difficult and there were fewer organized events, with fewer participants. More emergency situations like pandemics and floods can be expected in the future, and operations will need to be able to adapt in order to continue NJAIM's mission.

Consideration: Codify remote procedures for recruiting ambassadors, debriefing, and even hosting alternate events. Seek innovative ways to adapt programming with contingency plans for outreach if physical in-person events are not possible.

### 2. Update and improve documentation

Challenge: The evaluation form collects data on the number of attendees and other pertinent information about each event. The form is completed after the outreach event has ended, which has led to errors. It is unclear if all fields on the form are necessary or useful. The form lacks an area to explain the reason/context for the event itself.

Consideration: The form should be evaluated to determine if current fields are useful or if additional information should be collected. A section could be added, for use before the event, to describe the context/reason for the event. The VTC team should explore creating an updated form in Qualtrics so it can be filled out online during events.

### 3. Interaction with a diverse range of ages

Challenge: Ambassadors traveled to various types of communities and interacted with people of all ages, races, and ethnicities. Most interactions were with children; educational opportunities with teens and adults may have been missed.

Consideration: Partner with organizations that target teenagers or older adults and reach out to them to facilitate bicycle rides or classroom lessons. Consider events that might interest teenagers, like group rides to practical destinations (increasing their independence and autonomy), and walk audits that give students an opportunity to provide direct feedback about existing conditions.

### 4. Building momentum for more community engagement

Challenge: Bike rodeos can connect socially isolated households, like those with new parents or low-income residents or recent immigrants, to the rest of the community, and can build awareness of cycling as a practical mode of transportation. For popular events, it seems desirable to have a "next step" debriefing to keep the momentum and interest going and build to a greater outcome.

Consideration: Work with event organizers to distribute a sign-up sheet for a mailing list for people who want to stay in touch. Plan next steps to be held after successful bike rodeos. One option could be group rides on neighborhood streets to local destinations (community park, school, grocery store, convenience store, etc.). Another option could be to help locals identify where low-cost improvements could be made through walk or bike audits. After a few successful events, help locals plan and lead future events themselves, to help make the process more autonomous.

## 6. Conclusion

The New Jersey Ambassadors in Motion program achieved moderate success considering the challenging circumstances in 2021, reaching 279 people in central New Jersey. In 2021, ambassadors assisted with surveying for the Middlesex County Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. Additionally, NJAIM traveled to eight municipalities to promote bicycle and pedestrian safety.

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Resource Center would like to thank the supporters and sponsors including the New Jersey Department of Transportation, RideWise, Keep Middlesex Moving TMA, and the various schools and municipalities, that welcomed the ambassadors.



Figure 7: Bike Rodeo in East Brunswick, NJ