

New Jersey Ambassadors in Motion 2022 Summary Report



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Edward J. Bloustein School
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**BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN
RESOURCE CENTER**

Educate. Encourage. Empower.



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.

This report is made possible by the New Jersey Department of Transportation with funding from the United States Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration. New Jersey and the United States Government assume no liability for its contents or its use thereof.

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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, 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 State¹.

Nonetheless, pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities continued to rise in New Jersey (see Table 1). As per New Jersey State Police records, there were a total of 586 fatalities in New Jersey. Of all the counties in New Jersey, Middlesex County has the highest number of fatalities.

Table 1. NJ road fatalities by victim classification².

	2019	2020	2021	2022 (as of 10/31)
DRIVER	289	304	369	336
PASSENGER	81	86	85	85
PEDALCYCLIST	12	18	26	16
PEDESTRIAN	176	179	221	149
TOTAL	558	587	701	586

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 2022 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.

¹ Griffith, M. S. (2021). 2021 Update to Focused Approach to Safety. FHWA – Safety. https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/fas/docs/fas_memo_oct2021.pdf

² New Jersey State Police (NJSP). (2022). Year to Date - Statewide Fatal Crash Statistics for October 31, 2022. Trenton, NJ: New Jersey State Police, Fatal Accident Investigation Unit. Downloaded 02/15/2022.

Challenges

Many communities were still adjusting from changes brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. On March 7, 2022, Governor Murphy signed an executive order lifting the state's COVID-19 public health emergency, signaling a transition of the pandemic to an endemic. However, many events typically held in April or May, in particular bicycle rodeos at schools, were not held in 2022. The first event of 2022 occurred in July. Throughout the summer, the NJAIM 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. NJAIM agreed to participate in two additional events, but they were cancelled shortly before they were scheduled to happen.



Figure 1: Bike Rodeo in Piscataway, NJ

2. Overview of the Ambassadors in Motion Program

The New Jersey Ambassadors in Motion program (NJAIM) has been in operation since 2014. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Ambassadors are the BPRC's public outreach team. The team consists of adult ambassadors trained to educate and conduct outreach to bicyclists, pedestrians, and motorists to promote safety and active transportation throughout the state of New Jersey.

Program Goals

Ambassadors serve as the NJ BPRC's public outreach team. The part-time ambassadors work from April to November to fulfill the following 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 2. Bike Rodeo in Trenton, NJ

Ambassador Activities

During 2022 season, the NJ BPRC implemented only one out of the three forms of the AIM program's typical outreach: bike rodeo events. 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 2022, its eighth 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 bike rodeo events, they traveled to Piscataway, Trenton, and Highland Park.



Figure 3. Bike Rodeo in Highland Park, NJ

3. NJAIM Activities

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.

Event outreach

To reach a large number of pedestrians and bicyclists, Ambassador outreach targeted numerous bike rodeo events. To grab the attention of event participants, Ambassadors wore red NJAIM t-shirts to let the event coordinators and the public know that they were available for any bicycle and pedestrian safety assistance. Ambassadors typically explained New Jersey rules of the road pertinent to bicyclists and pedestrians, fitted children for helmets, and answered questions asked by event attendees. NJAIM consisted of a diverse group of Ambassadors, who were able to communicate with event participants in English and Spanish. This year Ambassadors reached hundreds of people through a variety of events. Most of the events were geared towards elementary school-aged children in communities throughout the state.

2022 events included:

Piscataway Bike Rodeo: In Piscataway, Ambassadors worked with Keep Middlesex Moving (KMM) to facilitate a bike rodeo. The event aimed at educating students regarding bicycle safety and NJ Safe Passing Law. The event was supported by the mayor, community police, news media (TapInto Piscataway), New Brunswick Bike Exchange, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJ-UH) and other local non-profits. New Brunswick Bike Exchange offered pumping and other repair services, and local non-profit coordinated the event with a raffle/ give away of bikes to participants. The event attracted a total of 130 people (63 children, 66 adults and 1 senior). Bike Rodeo was conducted on a stretch of Stockton Street in Piscataway. The street was blocked by Police cars and traffic cones. The bike route was designed on the street in a manner to teach students about different traffic safety measures.



Figure 4: Bike Rodeo in Piscataway, NJ



Figure 5: Bike Rodeo in Piscataway, NJ

Trenton Bike Rodeo: In Trenton, ambassadors worked with Greater Mercer TMA to conduct the bike rodeo event as part of the Art All Day event organized at Artworks. The bike route was designed in the parking lot of Art All Day. The rodeo was attended by 11 children and 13 adults. Ambassadors fitted and distributed helmets as well as taught kids about the safety of biking. At the end of the event, the used bicycles were given away to children who need it.



Figure 6. Bike Rodeo in Trenton, NJ

Highland Park Bike Rodeo: Ambassador worked with KMM and Highland Park Police Department to conduct the bike rodeo in the parking lot of Bartle School in Highland Park. The rodeo was attended by 14 children and 10 adults. The event was attended by additional participants such as a local non-profit and New Brunswick Bike Exchange. New Brunswick Bike Exchange offered pumping and other repair services. Kids were handed out bike accessories such as helmets, bells, LED lights and water bottles.



Figure 7. Bike Rodeo in Highland Park, NJ

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 2022.

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
Bike Rodeo Events	3	177

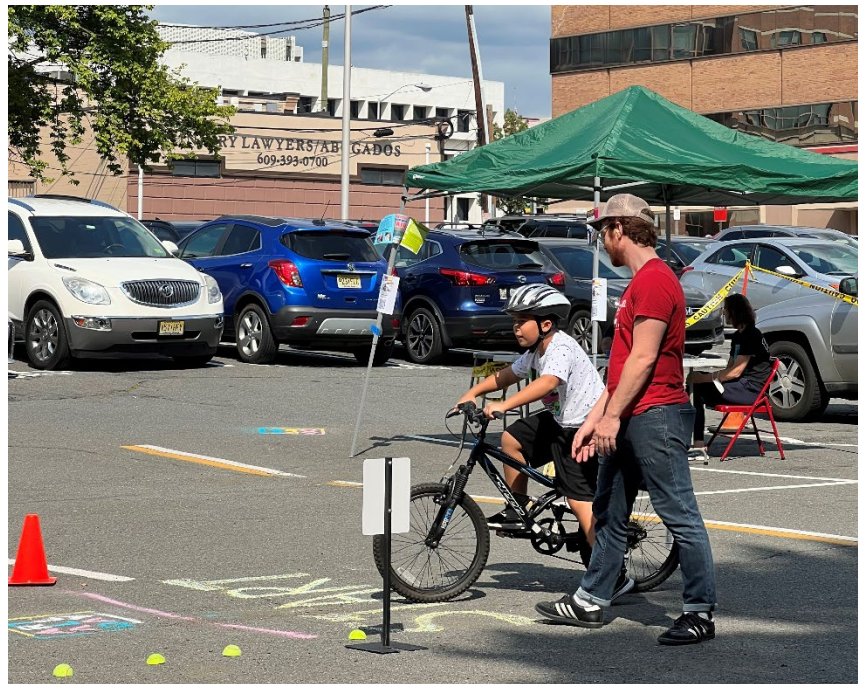


Figure 8: Bike Rodeo in Trenton, NJ

5. Lessons Learned

1. Facilitate bike rodeo events for adults/teens

Challenge: Ambassadors interacted with people of all ages, races, and ethnicities. Most interactions were with children; educational opportunities with teens and adults may have been missed. At the events, the adults even approached ambassadors asking for a similar bike rodeo event for them.

Consideration: Ambassadors can research organizations that target teenagers or older adults and reach out to them to facilitate bicycle rodeos or classroom lessons about being a bicyclist and pedestrian in New Jersey. Consider events that might interest teenagers and adults, like group rides to practical destinations (increasing their independence and autonomy) and walk audits that give adults an opportunity to provide direct feedback about existing conditions.

2. Administrative resiliency

Challenge: Due to the ongoing pandemic, NJAIM activities did not begin until the middle of summer. Ambassador recruitment in the spring 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.

3. Conduct outreach activities to promote events

Challenge: The bike rodeo events this year attracted less children. Except bike rodeo in Piscataway which attracted 63 children, the other two rodeos attracted less than 15 children.

Consideration: Ambassadors can assist the organizations in preparing an outreach framework which will help in promoting these events. Ambassadors can also get the feedback from the people attending the event on what motivates them to come for such events.

4. 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.

5. 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.



Figure 9: Bike Rodeo in Piscataway, NJ

6. Conclusion

The New Jersey Ambassadors in Motion program achieved moderate success considering the challenging circumstances in 2022, reaching 177 people in central New Jersey. In 2022, ambassadors were only able to assist with bike rodeo events for three municipalities.

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



Figure 10: Bike Rodeo in Piscataway, NJ