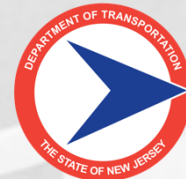


Advancing Complete Streets for Neurodivergent Individuals

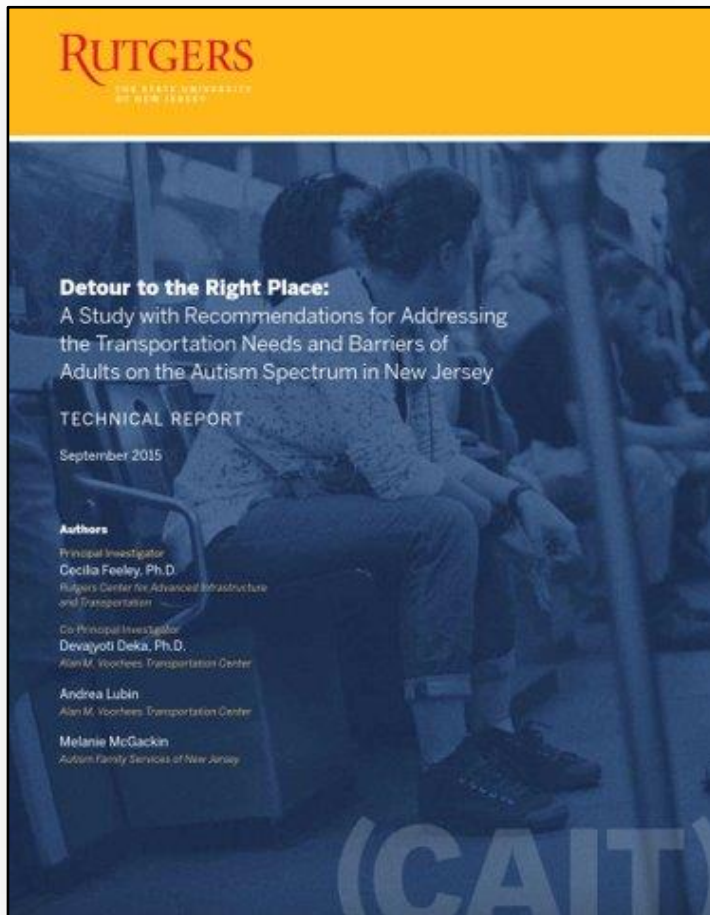
**2026 NJ Complete Streets Summit
April 21, 2026**



RUTGERS-NEW BRUNSWICK
**Edward J. Bloustein School
of Planning and Public Policy**

Bill S147

Session 2022 - 2023



January 2023: New Jersey Complete Streets legislation addressing ASD & IDD adopted

Legislation inspired from Task Force findings & Rutgers Report: Detour to the Right Place



Complete Streets Policy that Considers Autism and Intellectual Disabilities



Implement Complete Streets Policy



Develop Universal Design Concepts



Encourage Local Policy Adoption with ASD/IDD



Understanding Neurodivergence



What is Autism?

Autism Spectrum Disorder affects how people:



Learn



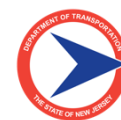
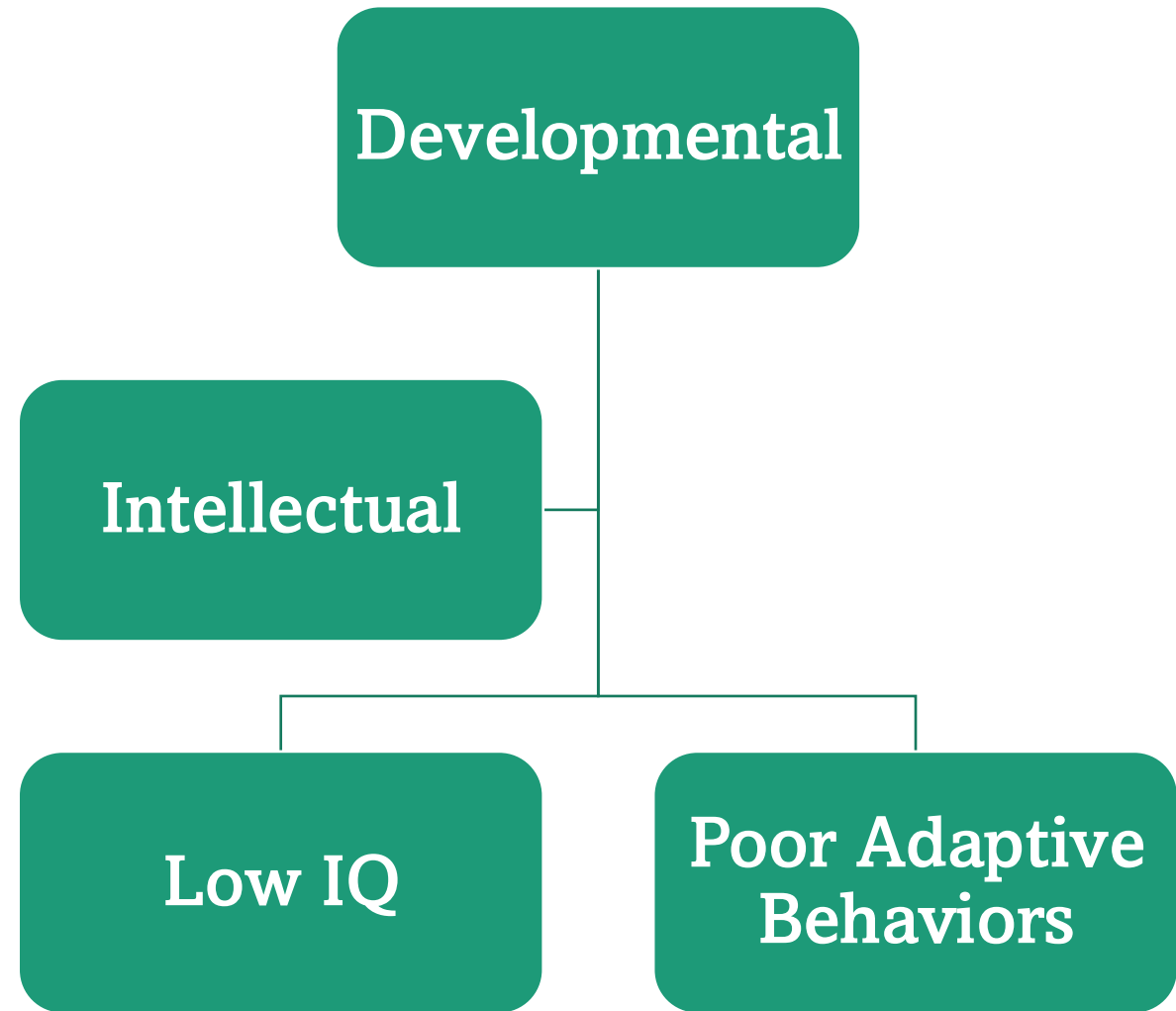
Communicate



Process Sensory Information



Intellectual Disabilities

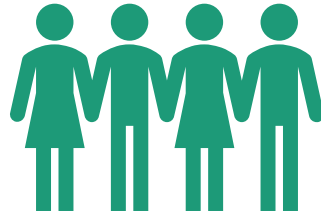


Adaptive Behaviors in People with IDD's

Adaptive Behaviors Are:



Conceptual Skills



Social Skills



Practical Skills



The Primer

Literature Review

Findings

Next Steps



Expert Interviews

The Arc of NJ

Community
Living Education
Project of New
Jersey

Knowlton School
of Ohio State
University

NJ Travel
Independence
Program &
RideWise TMA

NJ Council of
Development
and Disabilities

Jespy House

Self-Advocates

Planners with
ASD



Key Takeaways from Literature Review and Interviews



Limited transportation options for neurodivergent individuals – most trips taken as passengers in a car



Neurodivergence rates increasing



High motor vehicle speeds incompatible with pedestrian travel



Consistent infrastructure design



Avoid conflicting messages and signals



Key Takeaways from Literature Review and Interviews



Layered approaches address multiple concerns simultaneously



Pedestrian and bicycle safety strategies for youth also support people with ASD/IDDs



Align local Complete and Green Streets policies with new legislation

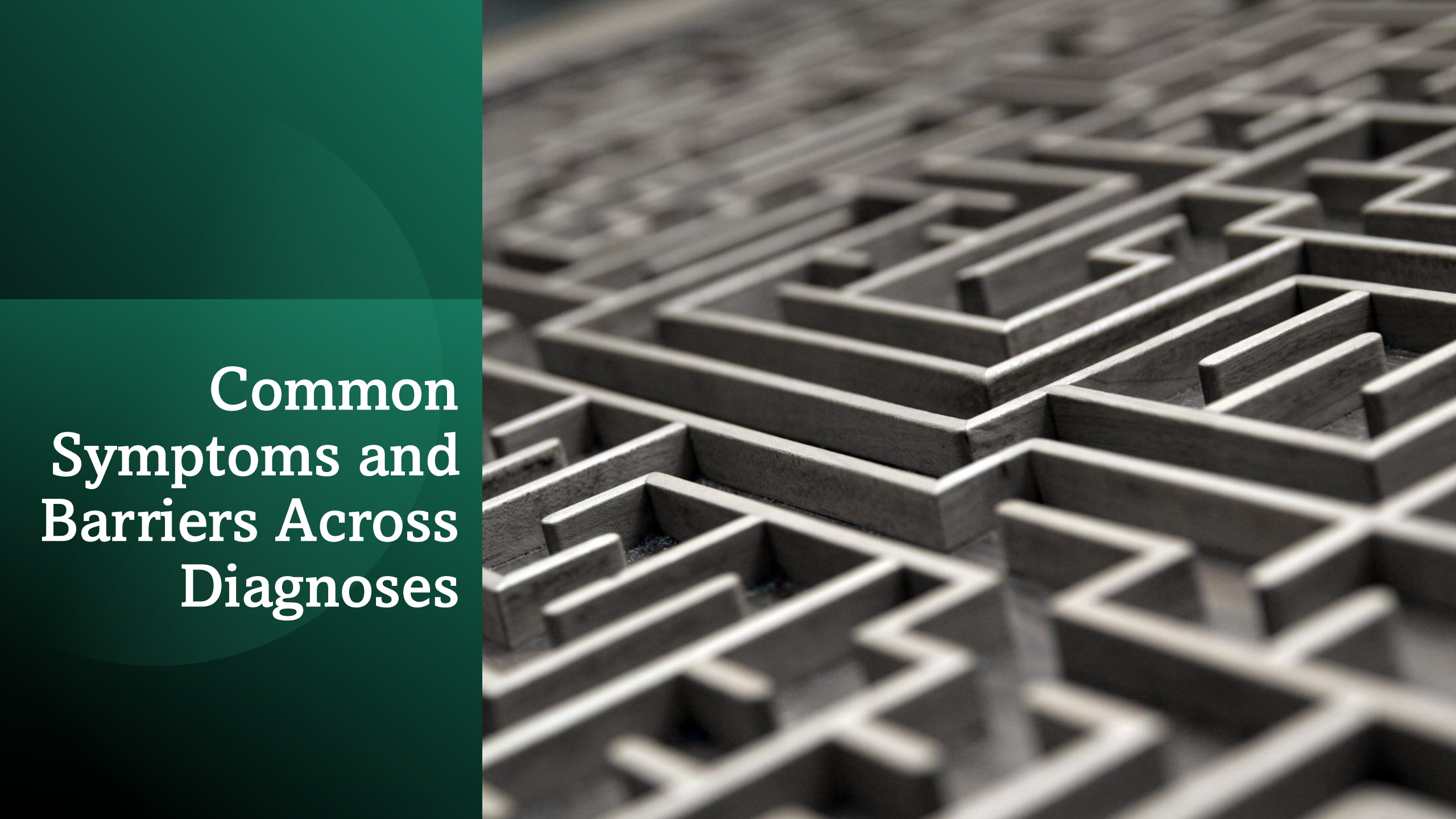


Include input from neurodivergent community in design considerations



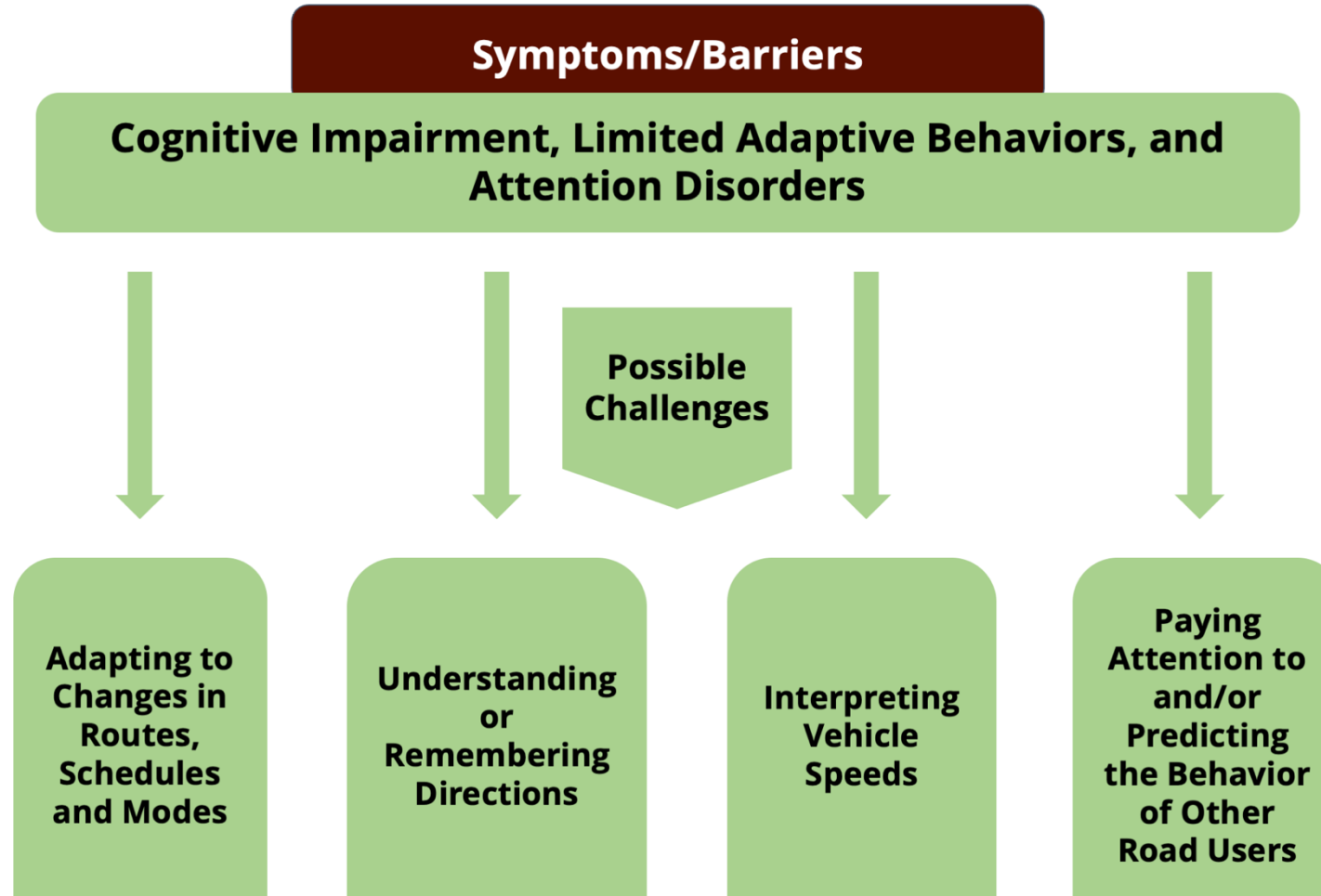
What benefits the neurodivergent community benefits everyone





**Common
Symptoms and
Barriers Across
Diagnoses**

Transportation Barriers



Transportation Barriers

Symptoms/Barriers

Speech & Language Delays, Non-Verbal Communication, Learning Disorders, Difficulty Navigating Social Situations

Possible Challenges

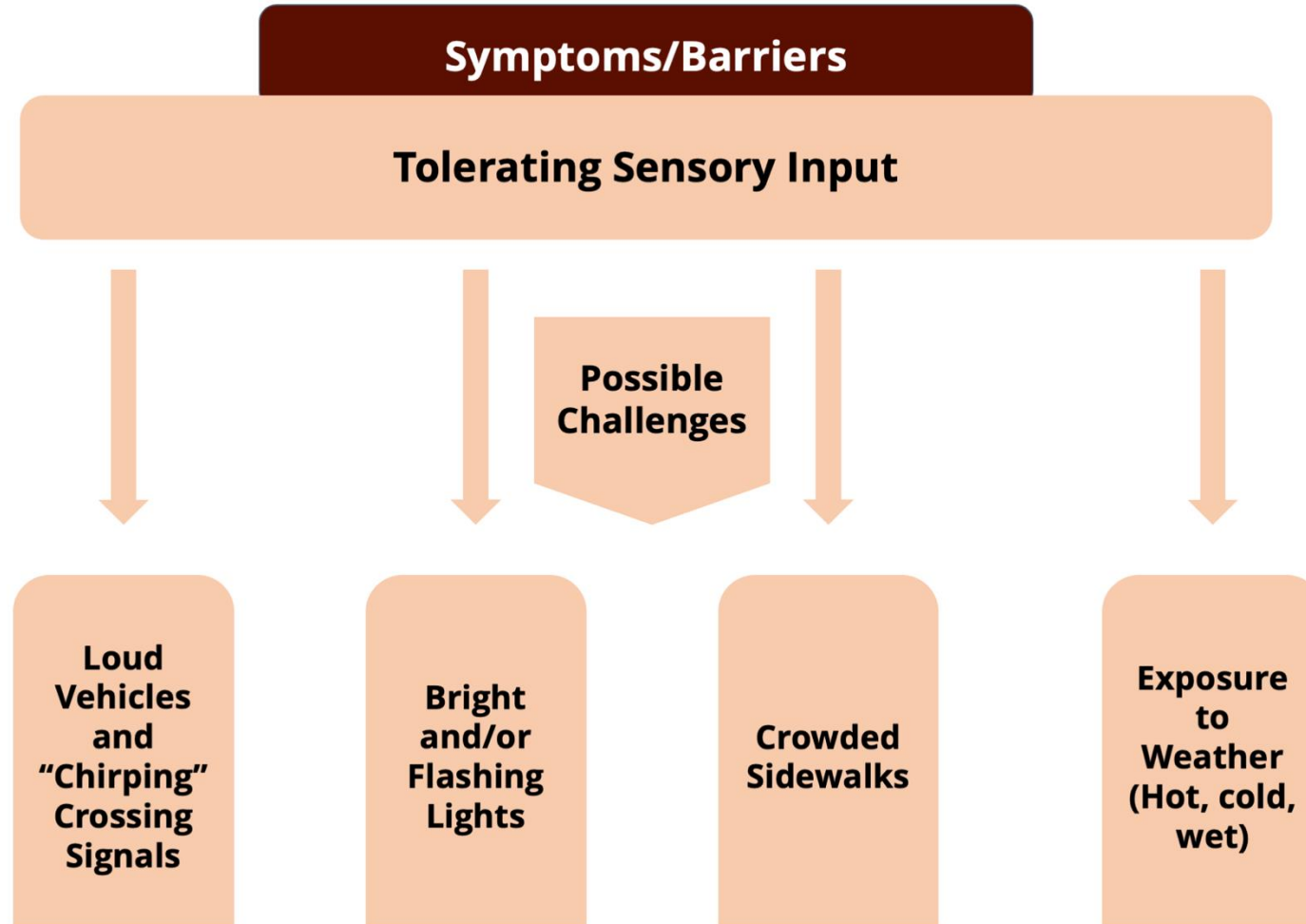
Asking Strangers for Help

Signaling Intent to Cross Street through Body Language

Reading Signs



Transportation Barriers



List of Topics Covered

Driving

Walking and Active Transportation

- Sidewalks
- Crosswalks
- Signalized Intersections
- Unsignalized Intersections and Mid-Block Crossings
- Pedestrian Refuge Islands
- Roundabouts
- Wayfinding

Bicycling

Transit and Travel Training



Findings: Sidewalks

Symptoms: Cognitive Impairment, Limited Adaptive Behaviors, and Attention Disorders

Challenges for those with ASD/IDDs	Improvements Suggested in Interviews
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of sidewalk network connectivity that forces those with ASD/IDDs to alter routes or remember complex directions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritizing sidewalk connections to broader regional networks.

Symptoms: Tolerating Sensory Input

Challenges for those with ASD/IDDs	Improvements Suggested in Interviews
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of sidewalk infrastructure and network connectivity that forces those with ASD/IDDs to walk in high-stress environments, such as on private property or in the roadway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sidewalks on both sides of all streets Prioritizing sidewalk connections to broader regional networks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sidewalk design that compels those with ASD/IDDs to walk close to sensory stressors, such as near motor vehicle traffic or other people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum width of 5 feet for sidewalks with a buffer between the sidewalk and adjacent traffic to reduce sensory issues (PROWAG requires a minimum of 4 feet of continuous clear width for unobstructed pedestrian access routes) Planting strips between the curb and walking path. Trees that provide both shade from the sun and a natural buffer between the sidewalk and the street
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sidewalk design that lacks accessibility features, making walking especially difficult for those with ASD/IDDs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ADA-compliant design features, such as curb cuts and level pavement




Blue Envelopes

- **Blue Envelopes can help:**
 - Inform officers about a driver's diagnosis
 - Protect drivers during traffic stops
- **NJ Target Zero Action Plan recommends program expansion**

DRIVER IS ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM
 DRIVER IS VERBAL DRIVER IS NONVERBAL

**“BLUE ENVELOPE”
IMPORTANT MOTOR VEHICLE PAPERS!!** *SPONSORED BY:*

Keep your hands on the steering wheel until otherwise directed, even if the officer is not at your car.
The officer may shine a flashlight in your car, may have a radio, and may have flashing lights on their car.
When the officer gets to your car let them know you have a blue envelope, answer the officer's questions, and ask the officer before moving any parts of your body.



POLICE OFFICER SPECTRUM AWARENESS GUIDE ON BACK OF ENVELOPE

CONTENTS: IMPORTANT VEHICLE PAPERS

- Driver's License
- Vehicle Registration
- Vehicle Insurance Card
- Contact Card

POLICE OFFICER:

- Driver may exhibit signs of anxiety due to bright lights and noises (your radio).
- Driver may display repetitive body movements or fidgeting and may have unusual eye contact.
- Speak clearly and use the most simplistic explanations possible, limit unnecessary details
- Allow driver extra time to respond, driver may need more time to formulate a response.
- Clearly tell the driver when the stop is over and they can leave.
- If the driver becomes upset consider contacting the person listed on the contact card.

[Mahwah Police Department](#)



Ideas for Future Investigation

Consider the needs of the neurodivergent community in future studies

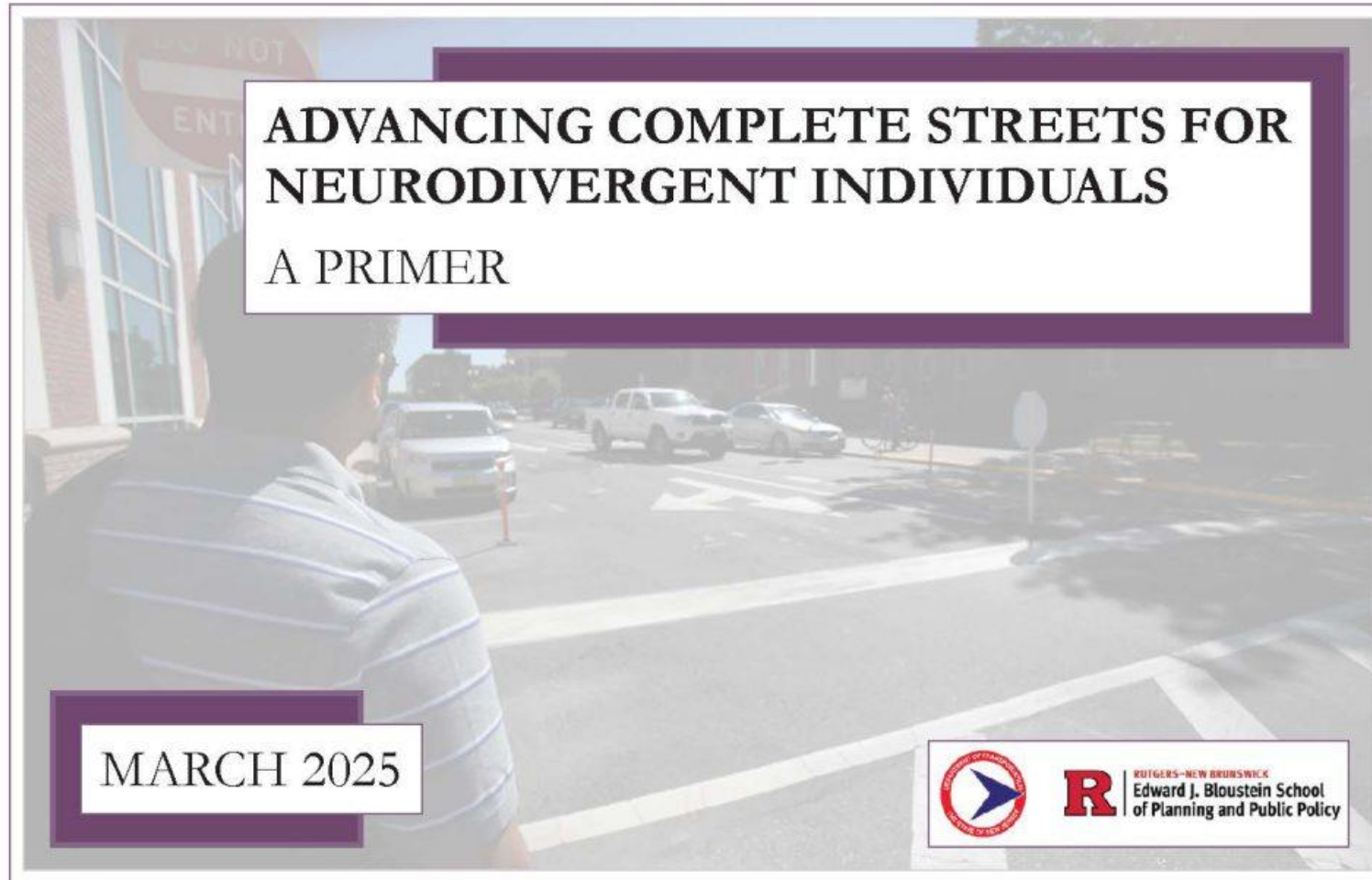
Include neurodivergent individuals in research and assessments

Create model language for ADA Transition Plans and IEPs

Test interventions that address visual, auditory, and tactile input



Read the full report online!



njbikeped.org/complete-streets-for-neurodivergent-individuals-primer

Thank you!

Contact:

NJDOT Bicycle & Pedestrian
Resource Center

njbikeped.org

Telephone: (848) 932-3714

Email: bikeped@ejb.rutgers.edu

