



Middlesex County

Improving Transit Services and Bicycle – Pedestrian Access In the County Route 529 Corridor

First Open House Meeting Highlights and Summary of Feedback

Monday, June 15, 2015; 6:00 – 8:30PM

**Johanna Westergard Library
20 Murray Avenue
Piscataway, NJ**

Participation

Sign-in sheets reflect 30 attendees who participated at the open house consisting of 8 participants from the general public, 10 steering committee members, 10 staff members from Middlesex County, and 2 staff members from North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority.

Opening Remarks

Piscataway Township Mayor Brian Wahler welcomed everyone to the meeting and highlighted some recent and forthcoming transportation improvements occurring in the Township and encouraged the attendees input and participation in the Corridor Study. Mayor Wahler commented that County Route 529 has been a work in progress for many years and has recently been widened with bicycle lanes from just north of Ethel Road to Haines Avenue in Piscataway. The roadway is scheduled to be similarly improved from the Edison Train Station to Ethel Road and will then carry improvements all the way past I-287. When all pending improvements are completed, there will be a 2 to 3 mile stretch of County Route 529 that will have bicycle lanes and sidewalks. Piscataway has been very important as the center piece of the Corridor from US-22 north of NJ-27, US-1, and County Route 514, at its southern border.

Mayor Wahler noted that the County Route 529 Corridor is a major generator in the growth of Piscataway as a leading municipality in Middlesex County and host to the Rutgers University Piscataway Campuses, which have rail access points and three exits on I-287, within the County Route 529 Corridor. Mayor

Wahler expressed his support for the corridor study and was grateful and appreciative for the interest shown by the public at the open house.

Staff Presentation

Anthony Gambilonghi, Middlesex County Transportation Planning Supervisor, discussed the purpose of the Study, which includes an analysis of existing and future growth occurring in the corridor, resulting in a need for expanded transit services along with bicycling and pedestrian improvements. These kinds of improvements will help serve points of attraction both along the corridor and in nearby areas. The Study seeks to increase overall mobility to job markets within the corridor and the region, especially for those who do not own automobiles or have limited access to auto use. Mr. Gambilonghi stated that the Study supports the vision and goals of the recently updated Middlesex County Transportation Plan, the NJTPA Regional Transportation Plan, and the new Regional Plan for Sustainable Development. The Study will also further advance the recommendations of past planning activities and proposals to improve pedestrian mobility and access to transit and other nearby facilities such as the NJTPA sponsored Walkable Community Workshop that was done some years ago in Edison Township. Mr. Gambilonghi welcomed and encouraged the public's input and invited all meeting participants to visit and interact with facilitators assigned to four "discussion tables" that focused on four transportation modes (rail, bus, bicycle, and pedestrian) for County Route 529. This format of outreach facilitated public input and an opportunity to obtain contact information from the project team for those that had questions or comments at a later date.

Ryan Rapp, Middlesex County Transportation Principal Planner, provided a PowerPoint presentation covering a variety of topics, including an analysis of current transit service, bicycle and pedestrian amenities, demographics, future trends (population, age, households, families, median household income, race, ethnicity, etc.), and employment data along County Route 529. Before breakout sessions began, Mr. Rapp stated there would be a recurring PowerPoint display of 40+ photographs of various bicycle, pedestrian and transit amenities currently in the Corridor Study area.

Public Feedback

As a means to solicit transportation recommendations for the Corridor, steering committee members and staff of the Middlesex County Office of Planning were stationed at four "discussion tables" covering four transportation modes (rail, bus, bicycle, and pedestrian) where they directly engaged in one-on-one conversations with the general public. Suggestions expressed by the public were transcribed onto large easel notepads. The general recommendations received from the public are outlined below:

Rail Transit

- Dunellen Borough
 - Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance measures.
 - Provide more bicycle lockers.
- Edison Township
 - More parking.
 - Better access to Kilmer Road parking lot.
 - Increase the number of bicycle lockers.

Bus Transit

- Service along County Route 529 corridor to New Brunswick via Highland Park.
- Service from Dunellen to Middlesex County College via County Route 529.
- Rutgers Bus Service from Livingston Campus to Edison Train Station. People walk this already.
- Return service along Cedar Lane (NJTRANSIT) and River Road to Highland Park and North Brunswick.
- Service from Plainfield to New Brunswick.
- Service from Study area to Raritan Valley Community College.
- Improved bus connectivity between the Raritan Valley Line and Northeast Corridor rail lines along County Route 529.
- Need for service along Centennial Avenue to get to local businesses (Jitney).
- Improvement to passenger information and conditions at Port Authority Bus Terminal (PABT).
- Restore bus service from Dunellen Rail Station to New Brunswick Rail Station. CoachUSA (Suburban) discontinued the service several years ago. A direct bus commute from northern Middlesex County to central Middlesex County is needed.

- Extend Bus Route #819 to Dunellen Rail Station from Metuchen Rail Station.
- Provide 7 day per week bus service from Dunellen Rail Station to Edison Rail Station via Washington Avenue/ Stelton Road / Plainfield Ave (directly on County Route 529).

Bicycle Facilities

- Dunellen Borough
 - Bike racks and lockers needed at Rail Station.
 - Connect existing parks, cultural community facilities and other resources with bicycle path plans.
 - Park, recreation, housing, community facilities and cultural layers should be used when developing a plan for a connected network of bicycle facilities and routes.
 - Give priority to locations so people can bike to train stations.
 - Jefferson Avenue Bridge over the Green Brook should remain open for bicycle and pedestrian traffic (connecting Green Brook Township, Dunellen Borough and Plainfield City).
- Edison Township
 - Bike connection along Kilmer Road to Rutgers University, Livingston Campus.
 - Bike connection to dense residential commuter/ village on north and south of Edison Rail Station.
 - Connection for workers along the County Route 529 corridor (i.e. mall, department stores, etc.)
 - A Bike Plan was completed for Edison Township in 1995. County Route 529's bike facilities lack intersection interconnectivity.
 - Include proposed Rutgers Bike Share Program to Edison Rail Station.
 - Include bike racks along the County Route 529 corridor and include in developer site plans.
- Piscataway Township:
 - Bike path between Hoes Lane and Centennial Avenue.
 - Scenic route from Centennial Avenue that went all the way to River Road.
 - Bike path to Roosevelt Park from Vineyard Road that does not require biking onto Route 1.
- Middlesex Greenway and East Cost Greenway Connectivity:
 - Towns: Woodbridge, Edison, and Metuchen

- Bicycle connection through train stations:
 - Dunellen (Raritan Valley Line), Edison (Northeast Corridor), Perth Amboy (North Jersey Coast Line)
- Take advantage of parks, high schools, cultural facilities and dog parks.
- Provide bicycle path (towpath concept) along historical sites.

Pedestrian Facilities

- Safe walking distance between sidewalk and roadway.
- Safer walking conditions during winter months.
- Develop a pedestrian plan with recommended safe walking routes (similar to bikeway planning).
- Widen sidewalks where there are more pedestrians.
- Better illumination at crosswalks.
- Benches and trash cans along the sidewalks.
- Trees and landscaping.
- Marked pedestrian crossing needed at 4th Street and Washington Avenue in Dunellen for little league baseball field in McCoy Park at the end of 4th street.
- Provide protected left turn lanes for vehicles traveling on North Avenue at the signalized intersection with Madison Avenue in Dunellen. Too many accidents (pedestrians and car) occur at this intersection.
- Walkway on Jefferson (in towns: Dunellen, Green Brook and Plainfield). Silver Bridge (on Jefferson) should be kept and not demolished.
- Restore bridge crossing the Green Brook in Green Brook; used as alternate to North Washington Avenue.

Middlesex County Route 529 Corridor Study

Public Open House of June 15, 2015 - Highlights and Summary of Feedback

Priorities:

Participants from the general public were asked to use a set of 8 sticker dots and were instructed to assign them to 12 categories weighted by their own individual level of importance. The 12 categories were pre-printed on a large display board prefaced by the question: ***“To improve the level of mobility along your travel route, which of these is most important to you?”***

Participants were allowed to distribute the eight sticker dots in any combination. For example, all 8 stickers could be placed in one category, or four stickers in two categories or one sticker in eight categories. The following table is the final result of this prioritization exercise.

Priority Category	Number of Dots
Better Bus Access and Service <i>(e.g. expanded service area coverage, more hours, increased frequency)</i>	7
Improvements to Amenities at Bus Stops	7
Better Train Access and Service	7
More Bike Paths and/or Lanes	6
More Sidewalks	6
New Traffic Signals for Pedestrians <i>(where none exist)</i>	6
Improvements to Amenities at Train Stations	5
More Bicycle Parking at Destinations	5
Better Sidewalks	4
Improvements to Existing Pedestrian Signals <i>(e.g. countdown timers)</i>	4
More Share the Road Signs	2
Better Crosswalks	2
Total Number of Dots	61