



Together North Jersey
Livable Task Force Meeting Notes
January 31, 2017



Notes

Livable Task force will updates on the arts related actions and the road diet workshop, followed by a Street Smart presentation and finally the Greenway guidebook outline.

Creative Placemaking : How to implement it and educate people regarding about it. It has to be at the municipal level to get the message out. It has to be with municipal officials and they have to understand more about it. How it has an economic impact in the community. The best way to do that is to literally go out into the communities and doing them. What needs to be done is to put together a brain storming meeting with a 1-2hour presentation and figure out what can be done in terms of education for the communities. Sushan Ishee, who works with Creative Placemaking has already put together a 6-8 hour program which can be viewed, make products of that which can be given to the elected officials and figure out how that can be used in the communities. Interested people can reach out for more information over emails and conference calls.

Road diet workshop : *(Tom Schulze distributed a printed summary of the workshop to everyone)* They had a very successful road diet workshop sometime in the middle of January 2017 over 2 days in NJTPA attended by 17-18 people. The instructor was from FHWA. Survey was conducted at the end of the workshop to get people's reactions on the various points regarding the workshop. What came out of it was that people wanted more one-to-one discussion on the topic and networking. The reaction on the rest of the workshop was really good which made them feel they hit on the right track and people want to learn more about this. At the DOT where they have these workshops every year, the attendees are generally their own engineers, people from counties and consultants. The profile of the attendees of this workshop were consultants, engineers, county level planners, project managers and a few non-traditional partners of TNJ and who gave high ratings to the workshop. Over 50 people signed up for a half-day workshop on parklets in the NJTPA. There will be Mayor of Rahway attending that as there are parklets in Rahway. There will be attendees from Hudson County TMA as they do a parklet day. There are 3 different ways of implementing it. It is not one thing. There will be an engineer who worked on the Summit parklet.

The next step for Livable taskforce is to figure out how to implement the learnings from the workshop into an action plan? Can we implement that at the local level? What are the support needed for the implementation? Anything that TNJ can do? Anyone willing to share what they learnt at the workshop and how will their agency use those learnings?

A municipality or a government body might be able to implement the learnings from the workshop. What can be more useful is to combine the complete street presentation (plenary meeting) with the road diet workshop as they are a part of complete streets program. Just the workshop was too much

information for one person at the municipal level to implement it. How many complete street policies have been adopted by the communities? Are they part of the road diet? They should cross-reference.

There are some great examples of road diet in NJ. There is a great video of that NJDOT which was circulated to the taskforce. Passaic has done it. It has to be a big and expensive undertaking. There should be more effort to circulate the case studies out there and have peer to peer exchanges where people can directly talk to the Passaic county engineers and planners as to how they are implementing the complete streets plan for their county. These information needs to get out county by county. The videos are helpful for visualizations.

There is a big education component that needs to be ongoing. The elected officials need to believe in it, advocate for it. Fire chief in the town needs to believe in it.

There is data on how to reduce traffic accidents. At the municipal level the municipal engineers need to understand the technical information about road diet and DOT can help get those messages to the local municipality. The first time you bring it up at the planning board meeting/gov body meeting you get an immediate push back by a large number. The testimonials were extremely useful. Getting those out will be highly beneficial.

Other important thing is measuring the feasibility of the road diet. The local demonstration project at the town of Montclair with Bloomfield- Glen ridge-Verona-Montclair to study the Bloomfield Avenue which is a county road. 5 intersections were studied and LOS was measured. Now we can say that LOS D to LOS B is not a big deal if it increases pedestrian safety. VTC did a health impact assessment of those 4 towns along that corridor as well. They found that if Road diet was implemented, it will improve people's health and well-being. So these 2 different types of measurements measured 2 very diff things which ended up crossing the project which is stalled for now. But now we know that pedestrian safety and measuring people's health is important and it is official and what the decision makers at the county level will say about this. So it's worth revisiting this stalled project.

There are several cost-benefit analysis that calculate healthcare dollars and which can be applied to calculate injuries and fatalities. They can be used to calculate how much x dollars needs to do a roadway improvement but it can save x million dollars in healthcare cost as they will reduce injuries by 30% (say) – x% in urban area and y% in rural area. This is a significant figure. Often the local decision makers rely on the dollars to implement the project. So they may want to see the dollar amount in the road diet project. So how will the decision makers be influenced by the amount of the tax dollars? Report for accidents/fire, pay for the police calls – a lot of diff levels and a healthier population is a tax base. Can we prove that a healthier population means a good tax base? There are national level studies town by town. People don't want to go to Bloomfield Avenue to park and shop or go to a restaurant. That's an economic impact for the area. The stress levels are really high on Bloomfield Avenue.

So what would it take to do the road diet project on the Bloomfield Avenue? Were the counties in this project at this workshop? Like Essex county etc. Support the revisiting the road diet as a part of this group. Bring in more decision makers on board. We can look into how to create the road diet and then how to implement it? VTC and Dot did a study following that. Bloomfield Ave is Essex County's most dangerous road having max pedestrian accidents. Another study included not just intersections but traffic modeling as well. It is worth looking at it as it includes the whole stretch from Newark to Caldwell

– a really important stretch of road in Essex County not just in terms of mobility but also in terms of health disparity, pedestrian injuries – so worth taking a look at.

Suggestion- look into Bloomfield Avenue, if possible the entire stretch of the road and see how road diet can be implemented in that stretch?

Street Smart Presentation by Keith Hamas : gave an overview of NJTPA's Street Smart program and how the campaign is helping the communities.

Greenway Guidebook Outline by Laurie: Background – interest was shown for a guidebook for greenway outline. This has been revised a few times with smaller taskforces earlier. Now it has been shared with the larger taskforces. The guidebook serves as a to-do list, step-by-step process of creating a greenway project in their community. It is also helpful for people to know where they are in the process.

The guidebook is divided in 3 sections.

Greenways are networks with exclusively dedicated bike paths. It can be shared with bike and pedestrians and sometimes have a combination of both paths. A greenway generally connects 2 places like Edison to Metuchen to Woodbridge. Morris Canal Greenway which is 102 mi long greenway connects 8 counties. It is a network and connects assets like schools, historical places etc.