



# Active Transportation Event Summary

Location: Online event

Date: Thursday, September 24, 2020

Time: 6-7 pm



## About UpNext North Jersey

UpNext North Jersey (UpNext) is an emerging leaders group that engages young North Jersey residents in a dialogue with the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA). The NJTPA seeks to better understand the values and needs of this demographic group related regarding key transportation and land use issues. The NJTPA provides UpNext members with unique opportunities to learn about and discuss timely topics related to regional planning and public policy, develop a network of peers who share similar interests, and engage with regional thought leaders and decision-makers.

The Public Outreach and Engagement Team, part of the Voorhees Transportation Center at Rutgers University (Rutgers-POET) worked with the NJTPA to plan four events for UpNext members throughout FY 2019-2020. This report describes Rutgers-POET's event planning and promotion work for the first event in FY 2020 – 2021, which occurred online and focused on supporting active transportation in Plan 2050, the upcoming Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) for the NJTPA region.

## Overview of the *Active Transportation* Event

The event included an overview presentation about active transportation, a review of a SWOT activity that members completed prior to the meeting, and a discussion about the bike/ped improvements that the NJTPA should focus on in Plan 2050. Rutgers-POET staff Nieves Pimienta gave a presentation on the present conditions of active transportation in North Jersey. Following the presentation, UpNext members participated in a discussion about their ideas for improving bicycle and pedestrian accessibility, safety, and convenience locally and regionally.

Rutgers-POET and the NJTPA selected this topic due to the publication of the Plan 2050 background paper, Active Transportation in the NJTPA Region. Bike/ped issues are of ongoing interest to UpNext members, and discussion about the active transportation background paper provided a good opportunity to introduce the group to Plan 2050. Rutgers-POET plans to continue to use Plan 2050 background papers as the basis for future UpNext events.

## Planning and Promotion

Leading up to the event, Rutgers-POET and NJTPA staff distributed the recently released background paper for context on the status of active transportation in North Jersey. UpNext members also received an online SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis of active transportation in the region; this was based on background paper information as well as members' own experiences. Rutgers-POET promoted the event through social media and email invitations. Members received a save-the-date invitation and follow-up emails to provide more information about the event. Rutgers-POET also promoted the event on the UpNext Facebook group and created an RSVP page.

## Agenda

*6:00 to 6:05 pm – Introduce the LRTP:* NJTPA staff introduced Plan 2050 and the series of background papers being published as part of the Plan's development.

*6:05 to 6:15 pm – Review active transportation background paper findings and SWOT analysis results:* Rutgers-POET staff Nieves Pimienta provided a short presentation of key findings from the active transportation background paper. She also summarized the results of the SWOT analysis that members completed prior to the event. The results of this analysis are provided in an appendix.

*6:15 to 6:40 pm – Discuss active transportation recommendations (breakout groups):* Pimienta gave attendees instructions for the breakout group activity. Attendees were sent into three Zoom breakout groups where they used the findings of the background paper and the results of the SWOT analysis to develop active transportation recommendations for the LRTP. An NJTPA or Rutgers-POET staff person was present in each room.

*6:40 to 6:50 pm: Present active transportation recommendations:* A member from each breakout group reported the recommendations that their group developed.

*6:50 to 7:00 pm: Closing remarks:* Rutgers-POET informed members about the active transportation challenge activity, where they are invited to walk or bike to a destination they do not normally walk or bike to, and share their experience on social media. Ted Ritter, NJTPA staff, also informed members about upcoming public engagement opportunities for Plan 2050.

## Attendance

15 members attended this virtual meeting. The previous virtual event in June had approximately 13 attendees, and the April virtual event had 15 attendees.

## Feedback

This section summarizes input the NJTPA received from UpNext members during the discussion portion of the event. Throughout the discussion, members showed support for building transportation infrastructure that encourages more people to travel by biking, walking, and using other forms of personal mobility. They discussed strategies for making these forms of travel more convenient, safe, and efficient, such as by allowing bikes and scooters on board NJ TRANSIT trains and buses, creating routes for long distance bike travel, and keeping bike lanes free of obstacles and debris.

*Build and retrofit transportation infrastructure that supports and promotes walking and biking rather than driving single occupancy vehicles.*

- » Prioritize bicycles and pedestrians in street design. Cyclists need protected bike lanes on roadways to be safe.
- » Public transit does not accommodate cyclists. NJ TRANSIT buses and other privately owned bus lines should have bicycle racks for riders.

*Ease restrictions on allowing bikes and other types of micro-mobility on board public transit.*

- » E-bikes and e-scooters are banned on board NJ TRANSIT vehicles. Is the agency worried about fire hazards?
- » Every public transit vehicle should be designed to accommodate regular bikes and scooters, and they should always be allowed on-board.
- » NJ TRANSIT buses and other privately owned bus lines need to have bike racks on them for riders to use.

*Improve road safety conditions and regulations for bicyclists and educate all road users on how bicyclists may use the road.*

- » Many new bicyclists do not know the rules of the road. Encouraging people to bike without educating them on the rules can be dangerous.
- » Micromobility users should wear helmets, although this may reinforce the idea that it is their responsibility to be safe and not the responsibility of drivers to share the road safely.
- » Motorists should also receive training to drive safely when cyclists and pedestrians are on the road. This topic is not heavily covered in driver education programs.

*Create a state-wide bike share program.*

- » A bike share program would make cycling much more accessible and affordable in New Jersey, but it should be implemented at the state level. There should be a single bike share provider for the entire state, so that riders do not have to worry about geographic gaps in service, or having to switch bikes, when they leave one city or county and enter another.