



Equitable Smart Mobility Event Summary

Location: Online event

Date: Thursday, December 17, 2020

Time: 6-7:15 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 is the second UpNext event for FY 2020-2021, following an event on active transportation in September. Both events coincided with the public engagement period for Plan 2050, the NJTPA's next Long Range Transportation Plan. During each event, UpNext members provided input on key topics to be addressed in Plan 2050.

Overview of the *Equitable Smart Mobility* Event

The event consisted of a presentation and small group discussions about how technology can improve transportation access and mobility, and equity. Prior to the event, Rutgers-POET provided a Plan 2050 background paper recently released by the NJTPA, titled Transportation Technology. Rutgers-POET gave a presentation to summarize key findings from this report. Following the presentation, attendees split into two breakout groups. Each group discussed how smart mobility technologies, such as rideshares, transit apps, and driverless cars, can provide

travel options for people with disabilities, seniors, transit-dependent riders, and bicyclists/pedestrians. Each group was tasked with developing 3-5 recommendations for how Plan 2050 can plan address the implementation of new technologies in ways that help the four demographic/travel groups mentioned above.

Planning and Promotion

Leading up to the event, Rutgers-POET worked with NJTPA staff to plan and promote the event. Rutgers-POET promoted the event through social media and email invitations. Members received a save-the-date invitation, followed by emails to provide more information. Rutgers-POET also promoted the event on the UpNext Facebook group and created an RSVP page.

Agenda

6:00 pm – Welcome: Ted Ritter, NJTPA staff, gave a brief welcome.

6:00 to 6:10 pm – Review background paper: Rutgers-POET staff Nieves Pimienta presented key information in the transportation technology background paper, with a focus on how technology is currently used and may be applied in the future to support travelers/commuters with limited mobility options. Pimienta then provided instructions for the breakout session to follow.

6:10 to 6:40 pm – Discuss equity and accessibility recommendations (breakout groups) UpNext members were divided into two breakout groups. Using the background paper and their own knowledge and experiences, the groups discussed how smart mobility can improve access and mobility for people with disabilities, seniors, transit-dependent riders, and bicyclists/pedestrians. Each group then developed 3-5 recommendations for how Plan 2050 can address the implementation of connected/automated vehicles and other transportation technologies to assist these demographic/user groups. An NJTPA or Rutgers-POET staff person was present in each room.

6:40 to 6:55 pm – Present recommendations: Members from each breakout group reported their recommendations.

6:55 to 7:10 pm – Active Transportation Challenge debrief: Rutgers-POET staff Sarah Tomasello reviewed responses submitted for the Active Transportation Challenges and facilitated a discussion with members about their experiences completing the activity.

7:10 to 7:15 pm – Update on Plan 2050 public engagement: Ted Ritter informed members about upcoming opportunities to participate in Plan 2050 public engagement, including an online survey and virtual events.

Attendance

Of approximately 30 people that attended the UpNext kickoff event in fall 2019, 12 members attended this virtual meeting. NJTPA Senior Director of Planning, Jeff Perlman, and Director of Long Range Transportation Planning, Lois Goldman, also attended.

Feedback

This section summarizes the recommendations the NJTPA received from UpNext members during the discussion portion of the event. Throughout the discussion, members discussed strategies for using technology to make travel more convenient, safe, and efficient for people with disabilities, seniors, and bicyclists/pedestrians. The group ran out of time when discussing the needs of various user groups and as a result did not develop recommendations for transit-dependent riders. The following section summarizes the comments from the discussion.

People with Disabilities

People with disabilities may rely on public transit, paratransit, private services, or friends and family to get to work/school/shopping. However, paratransit service can be restrictive and unreliable: public transit information such as station or stop announcements, maps, and schedules can be difficult to access for the deaf and blind; buses, trains, stations and stops may be physically inaccessible; and people with disabilities may have a fixed income. UpNext members discussed how intelligent transportation systems (ITS) and on-demand ride hailing can expand travel

options for people who have limited mobility. The group also discussed Helsinki and Japan as examples of smart delivery and how ITS/automated rideshares might help people with bags, bikes, or mobility devices get safely into a rideshare car.

Recommendations:

- » Create a communication app for passengers to notify conductors in advance that they will require assistance. The app could tell passengers where to wait and where to board for assistance and access to accessible seating, bridge plate ramps, etc.
- » Install smart screens and visual-audio interfaces and apps for people with ADHD, autistic people, people with visual impairment, or other situations where someone may have difficulty with interpreting a conventional transit map.
- » Use sensor-based traffic lights that extend walking signals for people who walk slowly.

Seniors

Participants discussed the differing needs of seniors who are in a retirement community with staff who can schedule trips versus seniors who live on their own. The discussion explored different possibilities for making transit more convenient for seniors via free public transit for those with a Medicare- or NJ TRANSIT-issued senior card; transit cards that are encoded with home addresses, frequent destinations, and emergency contact information; and transit cards that automatically calculate and pay the fare at point of sale/boarding. Additionally, participants discussed using a GPS app for seniors to summon a route deviation bus.

Recommendations:

- » Provide cards for seniors that provide free fare or automatic fare calculation. Cards can be ‘tapped’ using RFID for ease of use. Cards could have frequent destinations and home address information saved in case of emergencies.
- » Install wayfinding signs, LED, or eInk signs to display bus information in real time.
- » Allow users to use GPS-enabled apps to find and request a route deviation bus.

Bicyclists/Pedestrians

In communities that lack safe infrastructure, those who rely on biking and walking may have limited access to shopping and jobs. Group members discussed the possibility of having signals change in response to incoming pedestrians or bicyclists and having connected vehicles receive a signal when in proximity of a bicyclist that may be out of sight. Participants also discussed the idea that sometimes the best technology is no technology—streets can be designed to be safe without technology as shown in the example of Dutch intersection design.

Recommendations:

- » Send virtual signals that can alert drivers of connected vehicles about cyclists and pedestrians that may be out of their line of sight. Pedestrians could use the signal system to request a mid-block crossing.
- » Detect and change traffic signals in response to incoming pedestrians/bicyclists to prioritize smooth bike/pedestrian traffic.
- » Change laws to make e-bikes/scooters more efficient and convenient to use, i.e. increase the legal speed for e-bikes and e-scooters so people will use them instead of cars and prioritize micro-mobility devices and pedestrians as a good use of space.