FINAL REPORT Somerset County Roadway Safety Study



December 2021





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Executive Summary

The Somerset County Roadway Corridor Safety Analysis study conducted Road Safety Audits (RSAs) on five County roadway corridors and developed recommendations to improve safety for all roadway users, whether walking, biking, driving, or traveling by transit. The County conducted the study as part of the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority's (NJTPA's) subregional studies grant program. Intersection and corridor crash rankings from the NJTPA Network Screening List (NSL), an equity analysis to screen for underserved communities, and comprehensive public and stakeholder outreach informed the selection of the five corridors. The following five locations underwent Road Safety Audits:

- 1. Finderne Avenue/Main Street (CR 533) in Bridgewater Township, MP 29.60-30.60
- 2. Franklin Boulevard (CR 617) in Franklin Township, MP 0.00-1.00
- 3. Main Street (CR 533) in Millstone Borough, MP 25.14-25.87
- 4. Greenbrook Road (CR 636) in North Plainfield Borough, MP 0.70-1.97
- 5. Somerset Street (CR 626) in Raritan Borough, MP 0.00-0.67

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, many agencies restricted in-person travel and working/gathering in groups. Therefore, the project team conducted the in-field RSA review in a socially distanced manner, while pre- and post-audit meetings were held virtually via video conferencing to orient the RSA team and recap road safety observations.

Public and stakeholder outreach was also conducted virtually. An online mapping tool was used to gather input on areas of concern. Five virtual meetings were held, three for stakeholders and two for the public, to gather feedback and present findings. The road safety audit recommendations proposed in this report are presented for consideration of further development through many different paths, such as locally or regionally funded concept development studies; the NJTPA's Local Safety Engineering Assistance Program; incorporation into a planned County or municipal project; or through other means. While the recommendations herein seek to improve roadway safety, they should be thoroughly evaluated for feasibility and practicability and designed as appropriate by the roadway owner (County and Municipal) and/or a professional engineer for conformance to all applicable codes, standards, and best practices.

Finderne Avenue/Main Street (CR 533) in Bridgewater Township

This audit recommended investigating the feasibility of a road diet, which would reduce the number of vehicle travel lanes, on Main Street from Finderne Avenue to Chimney Rock Road, possibly extending eastward of this study area. Reducing the number of vehicle travel lanes and converting to a center two-way left turn lane, would create enough space for vehicle lane, bike lane and buffer in each direction of travel. A road diet would result in safety and mobility improvements for pedestrians and cyclists who use the corridor.



Franklin Boulevard (CR 617) in Franklin Township

Previous planning studies called for a road diet with bike lanes on Franklin Boulevard from Route 27 to Hamilton Street. This study explored the feasibility of adding bike lanes but found that since the curb-to-curb cartway width is limited at approximately 44 to 46 feet, there would not be a buffer and the bike lanes would be of substandard width. An alternate road diet option would include narrow shoulders in each direction that transition to curb extensions, which reduce pedestrian crossing distances at intersections and improve pedestrian visibility.

Main Street (CR 533) in Millstone Borough

These recommendations focus on improving pedestrian infrastructure, including implementing Leading Pedestrian Intervals (LPIs), which give pedestrians time to cross before vehicles get a green light; curb extensions; and continued maintenance of the sidewalk. The recommendations also include bridging the gap in the sidewalk that exists between Amwell Road (CR 514) and North River Street. The Borough is seeking to acquire the needed right-of-way for this improvement via redevelopment or acquisition of a vacant residential property located off the east side of Main Street. The Borough commented that State intervention would likely be needed to obtain property, or an easement, to construct this new sidewalk along the east side of Main Street. State intervention is needed for property acquisition since it is a financial hardship for the Borough to implement such an idea.

Greenbrook Road (CR 636) in North Plainfield Borough

This audit recommends making sidewalk and crosswalk upgrades at school locations to enhance pedestrian safety. Considering the location of the corridor near parks, schools, and other land uses that tend to have a relatively high share of active mode trip generation, it was recommended to stripe or construct curb extensions, refresh crosswalk striping, and/or consider the installation of Rectangular Rapid-Flashing Beacons (RRFBs) at unsignalized crossings. Daylighting or other striping on the shoulder would aid in prohibiting parking, allocating bus standing, and calming traffic speeds. At nearby signalized intersections, pushbutton upgrades, lighting, No Turn on Red restrictions, and LPIs are recommended. Further investigation would be necessary to implement these recommendations appropriately.

Somerset Street (CR 626) in Raritan Borough

This RSA recommends building upon the Complete Streets improvements proposed for Somerset Street as part of the Borough's active Transportation Alternative Set-Aside Program grant, under which the Borough is designing new streetscaping surrounding the Somerset Street corridor. The proposed TAP grant changes in side street circulation from two-way to oneway flow for this project provide an opportunity for ample curb extensions, allowing integrated green stormwater infrastructure that will provide a more resilient design to better receive and filter future stormwater. Additionally, RSA recommendations propose that ergonomic (or flared) crosswalks be striped between these intersection corner curb extensions to better reflect the pedestrian paths of travel at downtown intersections.



Next Steps/Conclusion

The study team worked with County Engineering to develop a list of tasks to improve traffic safety on these corridors, codified in the Implementation Matrix in the appended RSA reports. The recommendations should be shared with all responsible jurisdictions to aid in implementation. This approach recognizes a shared responsibility across numerous professions to see improved benefits in corridor crash performance beyond the anticipated reduction in crashes with the implementation of proven crash countermeasures. RideWise (the County's Transportation Management Association), law enforcement, and EMS are encouraged to continue their efforts to educate drivers, enforce traffic laws, improve response times to crashes, and reach underserved communities with these safety strategies.





