

OCEAN COUNTY BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN LINKAGES FROM THE BARNEGAT BRANCH TRAIL, NORTHERN SECTION



Community Involvement Action Plan

Ocean County's northern municipalities are home to a dense and growing population with many desirable destinations, including businesses, transit hubs, libraries, schools, and waterfront parks. However, bicycle and pedestrian access and connectivity in this area are limited. The goal of this study is to identify destinations and bicycle and pedestrian linkages between those destinations, residential areas, and the Barnegat Branch Trail (BBT). Recommended improvements to the facilities will be identified and prioritized based on existing studies, transportation-related data, demographic data, and feedback from the community.

Linkages will be prioritized where significant numbers of residents are reliant on walking and bicycling as means of transportation, including areas where poverty, minority populations, and non-English speaking individuals are above the County average. By focusing on improvements to safe access for the most reliant members of the community, benefits will be provided to all users, including reducing traffic congestion, providing safer commuting and recreational use, attracting new residents, and enhancing the quality of life for current residents.

Community members, especially those that rely on walking and bicycling, offer unique and specific perspectives on the transportation network they use every day. The feedback received from the public and community representatives is integral to guiding the study and producing recommendations most likely to improve safety and accessibility. The major objectives of the outreach strategy for this study are to provide regular updates and information to keep everyone within the affected communities informed throughout the process and to supply multiple methods for community members to provide input.

Meetings

TAC Meetings

The project team will develop a list of key technical representatives involved in transportation-related decision making that are interested in the regional and subregional goals of the study. These key representatives will be invited to join a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). Members of the TAC will provide input on the goals and objectives of this study, as well as feedback on any materials used in outreach or reporting. Representatives from each organization will be requested to send someone in their place if they are unable to attend. Conference call capability will also be provided for those unable to attend in-person.

- **TAC Meeting #1 (April 2018):** The first TAC meeting will be used to present the Purpose and Need of the study to the members of the committee. Materials reviewed by the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) and Ocean County, including destinations mapping, review of existing studies and plans, environmental justice mapping, and the project fact sheet will be provided in advance of the meeting to help familiarize committee members with the

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study area and vicinity. TAC input will be requested on outreach components including the following:

- Community Involvement Action Plan
 - Study Website
 - Public Outreach Survey
 - Environmental Justice Populations
- **TAC Meeting #2 (September 2018):** During this meeting, feedback provided in the focus group sessions and the first public meeting will be presented to the TAC, as well as summarized results of the bicycle compatibility assessment, crash analysis, and environmental justice analysis. Michael Baker will present potential facility improvements for discussion among the TAC at this meeting.
- **TAC Meeting #3 (November 2018):** Michael Baker will present recommended facility improvements, routes, and an implementation matrix for feedback from the TAC. The TAC will also be provided maps and details regarding cost, implementation barriers, responsible agencies, and benefits in a format where potential treatments can be compared and prioritized. TAC members will be asked to prioritize the potential treatments based on the data provided. The outline of the final report will also be provided and discussed at this meeting.
- **TAC Meeting #4 (March 2019):** The draft final report will be summarized and reviewed. Input from the project team will be requested prior to the meeting to allow multiple weeks for NJTPA and Ocean County review of the document. Comments and feedback will be incorporated into the final draft of the submitted final report.

Focus Groups Sessions (September 2018)

Two (2) meetings with local stakeholders will be conducted by Heyer, Gruel & Associates (HGA). The TAC will determine the list of stakeholders to invite to the focus group sessions. Two individual group sessions will be held during which stakeholders will be interviewed to gather expertise and input on specific local issues relating to the study. This information will be used to help determine priority linkages and improvement recommendations.

Session materials such as maps, informational poster boards, and interview questions to lead discussion will be prepared in advance and provided at the focus group sessions.

Public Meetings and Community Events (June – September 2018)

Two (2) public meetings will be held. The first meeting will be organized to provide general information regarding the project background and explain all the methods that interested parties can use to submit feedback. It will also be an opportunity to record public priorities, frequent destination, and specific facility concerns in person, recording verbal feedback and providing maps for the public to record location specific comments. Surveys, maps, project fact sheets, and bookmarks with links to the public feedback page of the project website will be made available at this public meeting. The meeting will take place in an area with an identified environmental justice population, and the location will have

OCEAN COUNTY BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN LINKAGES FROM THE BARNEGAT BRANCH TRAIL, NORTHERN SECTION



access to public transit, and the facility will be ADA accessible. Meetings will take place when people are most likely to be available or already visiting the meeting location.

At the second public meeting, Michael Baker will provide the results of the completed analyses, present the recommended improvements included in the draft final report, and seek feedback from the public. As with the first meeting, the location of the second public meeting will be held in an area with an identified environmental justice population, access to public transit, and an ADA accessible facility.

Opportunities for setting up booths or providing staff at other scheduled community events will also be considered. Community events will be discussed with the TAC at the first TAC meeting.

Materials that will be provided for these meetings and events include large printouts of the local destinations mapping for the public to provide comment, hard copies of the survey, and the project fact sheet. Materials will be provided in Spanish and other languages as necessary. The project team will seek to engage bicycle and pedestrian interest groups and BBT users to assist in identifying current gaps in existing facilities, potential linkages, popular origins, destinations, and routes, and priorities for developing new and improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Flyers will be placed at local destinations, such as businesses, libraries, and places of worship, within the community, prioritizing locations within the environmental justice communities identified by the census data.

Municipal Officials and Stakeholders Meetings (November 2018)

HGA will lead up to four (4) in-person meetings with officials and stakeholders from the municipalities encompassing the study area. A contact list of desired attendees will be determined by the TAC. The study objectives, goals, and previously completed analysis will be summarized and presented. HGA will incorporate information from existing studies, ordinances, and environmental justice analyses to present at the meetings and will seek municipal input on potential issues and strategies.

The initial draft implementation matrix and recommended facility improvements, as well as related maps will be presented for additional input from the members of Beachwood Borough, Berkeley Township, South Toms River Borough and Toms River Township. The input from the community groups and officials will aid in the prioritization of the identified facility improvements and routes. Meeting agendas and meeting summaries will be provided.

Media and Outreach

Press Releases and Promotion

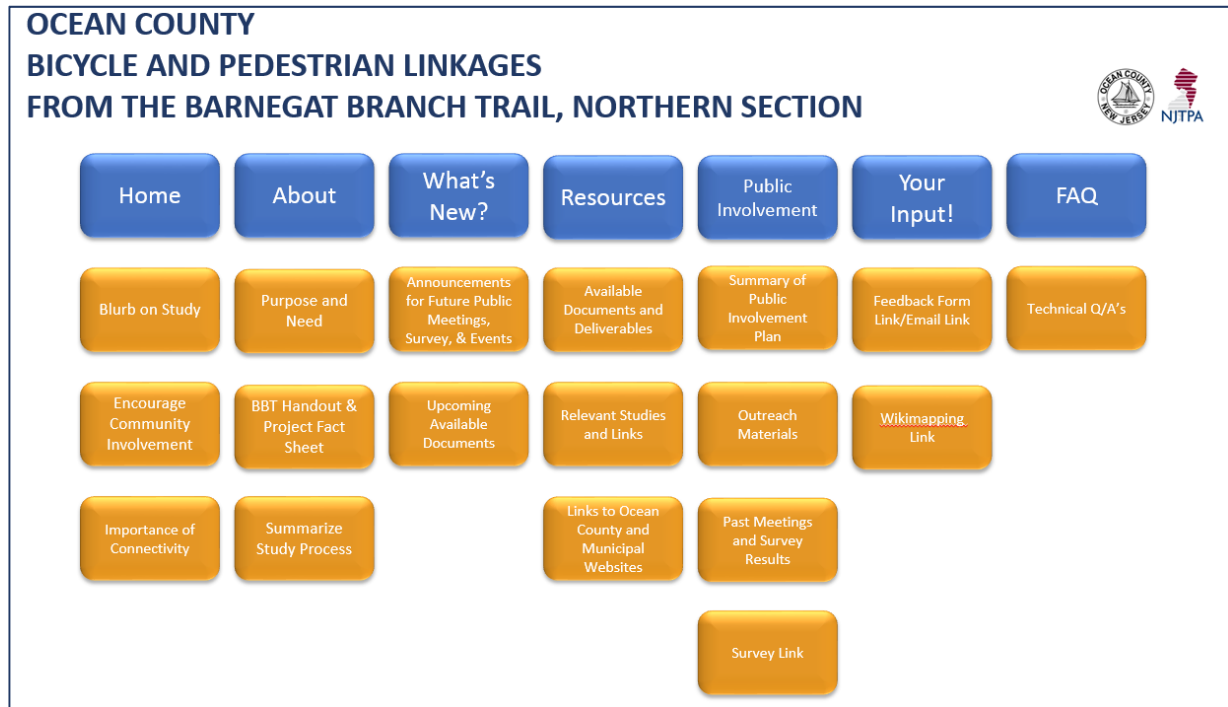
Press releases regarding events and major milestones of the study will be released by Ocean County's Public Information Officer, including materials requested from Michael Baker. Ocean County, NJTPA, and TAC organizations will also use their available websites and social media to promote public outreach materials, project progress, and events.

OCEAN COUNTY BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN LINKAGES FROM THE BARNEGAT BRANCH TRAIL, NORTHERN SECTION



Website (Ongoing Updates)

A project website will be created to facilitate outreach and document sharing. The website will be organized according to the following framework:



www.bbtconnections.com

The website address will be displayed on handouts, at public events, on surveys, and on the County website. The website will be updated by Michael Baker once materials and information are approved by the project team and, when appropriate, the TAC. Michael Baker will maintain the website until the conclusion of the study, June 30, 2019. As the study progresses, the website will be updated with proposed recommendations and facility improvements, and as the study concludes, the recommendations from the Final Report will be displayed.

Multiple options are provided for public users that want to leave comments or information. The survey, a crowdsourcing mapping tool, and contact information will also be provided for public input.

Public Outreach Survey (June 2018)

A public outreach survey will be conducted to determine local walking and bicycling usage. Travel patterns, frequency, destinations, and concerns will be collected, and the results will aid in identifying routes that are comfortable or dangerous from the public perspective.

The survey will be provided in hard copy and online with links placed on social media outlets, the study website, and the County website. Survey results will be collected, summarized, and ultimately used to

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identify locations where barriers to walking and bicycling are present near the existing and proposed Barnegat Branch Trail.

Project Fact Sheet (April 2018)

A one-page document will be created to circulate at outreach events and meetings. This document will summarize Purpose and Need of the study, as well as the study approach. A map depicting the existing and proposed portions of the trail, local destinations, and municipalities within the study area will also be provided to supplement the information.

The project fact sheet will also be provided electronically on the project and County websites. The fact sheet will inform stakeholders and the public with a basic understanding of the study and how it pertains to them, directing the reader to project website comment form, survey, and email to provide input.

Preference Survey (September 2018)

Civic Eye Collaborative will build a preference survey to conduct online, publicly. The questions on this survey will focus on determining the types of environments or facility features that are valued or desired by the community, complementing the public outreach survey. Videos, maps, and pictures will be provided on the preference survey to help conceptualize the broad range of physical design alternatives that could be considered in the implementation strategies.

The TAC's input will be used to develop the survey to effectively reach and gain meaningful input from all the communities within the study area. These communities are likely to differ in their preferences about proposed improvements based on demographics and current transportation access and use.

This survey will also be distributed online through social media outlets, the study website, and the County website. A summary of the results will be provided.

Video (Ongoing)

Civic Eye Collaborative and Michael Baker will develop a series of narrated videos for public outreach purposes that will include interviews with community members who walk or bike in the study area, fly-over video obtained from drone footage, and videos from the perspective of a bicyclist riding the BBT and potential linkages.

Links to the videos will be available on the study and County websites, as well as social media. Video can also be shown at meetings and other community events. The videos will be engaging and help draw public interest, as well as inform the audience on the study and related topics.