

Tri-State Transportation Campaign

Greater Newark Conservancy

Newark Complete Streets Walking Audit July 2013

On July 22, 2013, TSTC teamed up with 40 high school student interns and their mentors from the Greater Newark Conservancy's (GNC) Newark Youth Leadership Project to conduct a Complete Streets Audit in the neighborhood surrounding the Greater Newark Conservancy on Prince Street in Newark.

During the first half of the workshop, students learned about the principles of Complete Streets as well as similar efforts taking place throughout New Jersey. Following the classroom portion of the day, students conducted walking audits in various parts of Newark, and were encouraged to take on the point of view as a pedestrian, cyclist, senior citizen, someone with a physical disability, a young child or a parent/ babysitter with young children.






Upon returning to the classroom, each group presented its findings. Students flagged the lack of bike lanes and bike racks, fading crosswalks, speeding cars and trucks, broken or missing sidewalks and a lack of bus shelters as common problems facing people who use Newark's streets. While the students highlighted the bike and pedestrian amenities they saw, like bike lanes and ADA-compliant curb ramps along Jones Street, they were astute to notice that many of these improvements seemed to be implemented as spot treatments — not as part of a thorough Complete Streets overhaul.

Why such an audit?

Newark adopted a Complete Streets resolution in September 2013. With 40% of residents not owning a vehicle, many rely on public transit, bicycling or walking to get around day to day. Most GNC students are not of the legal driving age and thus must rely on transit, biking or walking as a main form of transportation. No matter where the students live, they all end up at GNC—what better place to conduct the audit than in their own back yard!



Newark Youth Leadership Project students participated in a walk audit and Complete Streets workshop with TSTC. South Orange Ave.

Newark-at-a-Glance		
Population*		
	City of Newark	Essex County
	277,727	787,744
Newark makes up 35 percent of the population in Essex County. It is the largest city in the state of New Jersey.		
Commute Mode**		
	City of Newark	Essex County
	49%	62%
	25%	20%
 	8%	5%
Other Facts		
Bus Stops	944	
Bus Routes	42	
Rail Stations	17	
Schools	88	

*Source: United States Census Bureau: State and County QuickFacts. 2012 estimates.

**Source: United States Census Bureau/ American FactFinder. "Means of Transportation to Work: 2011 ACS 5-year estimates". 10 September 2013.

Existing Conditions: Problems Identified Near Greater Newark Conservancy



LEGEND

- Greater Newark Conservancy Study Area
- Speeding
- Sidewalks missing/in poor condition
- Need bike lane
- Missing crosswalks
- Missing curb ramp

- Pedestrian signal broken
- Bus stop- no shelter/seating
- Existing bike lane
- Park
- School

Graphic: Tri-State Transportation Campaign

Findings

The major concerns documented during the Complete Streets Audit can be placed into four categories, as follows:

Pedestrian Infrastructure – The Audit found several infrastructural problems on sidewalks and streets in the area immediately surrounding the Greater Newark Conservancy that harm the pedestrian and cyclist environment. These problems detract from the walkability in the corridor and should be addressed to improve safety and access for all users of the roadway:

1. Unmarked or poorly marked crosswalks;
2. Lack of or broken pedestrian crossing signals;
3. No security cameras;
4. Cracked, damaged, obstructed and narrow sidewalks and curb ramps; and
5. Curb ramps improperly aligned with crosswalks or missing.



Overgrown vegetation and broken sidewalk forces pedestrian to walk in the street along S. Orange Ave.



Incomplete sidewalk on Prince St.



Misaligned ramp on Court St.



Faded crosswalk on Prince St and S. Orange Ave.

Bicycle Infrastructure – The Audit also uncovered many examples of the lack of bicycle infrastructure and where dedicated bike lanes were found, the audit revealed other issues that contribute to a poor pedestrian environment, namely:

1. Lack of dedicated bike lanes (Springfield Ave., S. Orange Ave., MLK Blvd., Mercer St. and Court St.);
2. Incomplete bike network connecting to Greenway (intersection of Jones St. and Springfield Ave.) bike lanes limited to Jones St. only;
3. Insufficient bike parking amenities; and
4. No shoulders/wide travel lanes (Court St., S. Orange Ave.).



Example of incomplete bike network mentioned in #4 above. Intersection of Jones St., Court St., Springfield Ave., Irvine Turner Blvd.



Jones St. portion of the Newark Greenway, which is part of the East Coast Greenway.



Springfield Ave. Wide travel lanes, no shoulders or dedicated bike lanes.



S. Orange Ave. Wide travel lanes, no shoulders or dedicated bike lanes.

Mass Transit Access – The Complete Streets Audit area is served by several bus stops. The condition, amenities and locations varied significantly within the audit area. The results of the Walk Audit found:

1. Lack of adequate lighting, lack of shelters, lack of places to sit;
2. Location of bus stop on Jones St on a curve posed safety concerns;
3. Significant discrepancy between amenities at traditional NJT bus stops versus GO Bus (Springfield Ave.);
4. Lack of crosswalks near bus stops; and
5. Need for clearer signage.



GoBus stop on Springfield Ave./Jones St.



NJT Bus stop on Springfield Ave. (same block and a few feet from GoBus stop pictured on left)

Driver Behavior – In addition to the issues listed above, surveyors also found that certain driver behaviors were harming the pedestrian experience within the audit area. These issues include:

1. Speeding motorists, especially on streets with wide lanes (Springfield Ave. and S. Orange Ave.); and
2. Drivers making aggressive turns, passing on right and failing to stop for pedestrians.



Photo credit: www.annarbor.com

Potential Solutions

Pedestrian Infrastructure Recommendations:

1. Repaint faded crosswalks or paint new crosswalks where they do not exist;
2. Install high-visibility thermoplastic crosswalks to improve motorist awareness of pedestrian activity;
3. Repair broken push-to-walk buttons and install where missing;
4. Repave sidewalks as needed to repair dangerous pavement conditions;
5. Maintain vegetation;
6. Installation of pedestrian scale lighting; and
7. Safety/Security Cameras.



Visible crosswalk, pedestrian countdown signal and pedestrian island on Delancey St., NYC
Photo credit: www.boweryboogie.com



Bicycle Infrastructure Recommendations:

1. Dedicated bike lanes along MLK Blvd, Springfield Ave., S. Orange Ave;
2. Install "Share the Road" signs as needed; and
3. Place bicycle parking at key locations near businesses, schools, parks, residential buildings.



Dedicated bike lane with buffer on Washington Street, Newark.



On-street bicycle parking in a city.
Photo credit: www.planetizen.com

Mass Transit Access Recommendations:

1. Install and maintain bus shelters;
2. Repair and construct sidewalks leading to bus stops;
3. Provide ample seating and trash cans at stops; and
4. Link bus stops to crosswalks.



Example of bus stop with shelters and seating as well as visual cues to motorists to looking for peds—crosswalk and signage

Driver Behavior Recommendations:

1. Implement a “road diet” along Springfield Ave., S. Orange Ave., MLK Blvd.; and
2. Increase enforcement of speeding and motorists who fail to stop for pedestrians in crosswalks.



Overall Recommendations:

- Improve cleanliness of corridor, perhaps through a Newark civic volunteer organization.
- Create a Complete Streets Policy implementation plan for the City of Newark.
- Encourage community engagement in future bicycle/pedestrian planning within the City.

For More Information

The July 2013 walking audit was organized by Janna Chernetz, NJ Advocate (TSTC), Kathi Ko, Research & Development Associate (TSTC) Ben Rosenblatt, Intern (TSTC) with significant support from the Greater Newark Conservancy, Newark Youth Leadership Program.

This memo was written by Janna Chernetz and Kathi Ko.

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About GNC and TSTC



Greater Newark Conservancy promotes environmental stewardship to improve the quality of life in New Jersey's urban communities. Founded in 1987, the Conservancy has four program areas: environmental education, community greening and gardening, job training and advocacy for environmental justice.

The Newark Youth Leadership Project (NYLP) is a year round job and leadership training program which provides Newark, NJ high school and college youth with job training experience, leadership development, and exposure to different career options in environmental and horticultural fields and opportunities for pursuing a college education. In addition, interns are given the chance to participate in outdoor horticultural activities that they would probably never experience otherwise. Through this program the Conservancy seeks to improve conditions in the urban community by increasing employability and earning potential. The year round NYLP has now been in operation for over ten years and has had hundreds Newark youth participants.

Administrative Office & Urban Environmental
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Tri-State Transportation Campaign is a non-profit organization dedicated to reducing car dependency in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. Leading environmental and planning organizations formed TSTC in the early nineties as a response to the mounting economic and environmental costs of automobile and truck dependence and promising reforms in federal transportation policy. TSTC marshals the talents of the region's most effective environmental and transportation policy watchdogs into a dynamic combination of community and campaign organizing, technical analysis, and media and legal advocacy. Its board of directors consists of senior staff from the founding organizations, as well as representatives from industry and academia.

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