

2021 Complete Streets Workshop Series
Schenectady County, NY
Two-Part Virtual Educational Workshop
Meeting Summary

Workshop provided by:



Background:

Schenectady County, NY submitted a successful 2020 Complete Streets Educational & Technical Workshop Series Application in the summer of 2020 proposing to host a Workshop to discuss the formation of a countywide group to help make separate municipal plans cohesive to each other. In the Spring of 2021, a two-part virtual (online) workshop was held to both provide educational outreach to municipal officials and staff as well as local and regional advocates and representatives of groups and associations with an interest in Complete Streets Implementation in Schenectady County.

The first workshop was held with municipal officials and staff on April 16, 2021. This workshop was intended to provide an educational outreach element to municipal officials and staff and begin the discussion of a potential countywide group. The second workshop, which included the advocates and representatives of groups and associations with an interest in Complete Streets in Schenectady County, was held on May 6, 2021. This workshop built upon the initial discussions from Workshop #1 by further discussing the potential for a countywide collaboration group, potential near- and far-term project collaboration opportunities, and overall Complete Streets coordination with the benefit of input from advocates and representatives who do not own or maintain any of the infrastructure but represent and advocate for their use and improvement.

Workshop Attendance:

The first workshop was attended by 18 individuals, not including the Consultant Team. The second workshop was also attended by 18 individuals (though a few different individuals than in the first workshop). There were 4 advocates at the second workshop – one from Cycle Schenectady, two from Schenectady Neighborhood Associations, and a representative from the American Council for the Blind.

Workshop #1 (April 16, 2021) – Summary Notes:

How are projects funded and how can they be coordinated?

A. Kohout noted that the Village is utilizing TAP funding for a multi-use path on Washington Ave around Collins Lake. This will complete the loop around the lake. It is significant as it ends at the bike path which is shared between Freemans Bridge Road in Glenville and Collins Park in the Village. J. Levy noted that the connection between the Village and Freemans Bridge Road in Glenville was recently funded and will be upgraded in the future as well.

L. Robertson noted that Niskayuna and Schenectady are working on a joint project along Nott Street between Lexington and Baker to install a missing section of sidewalk.

P. Knutson noted that the County is working with Niskayuna on traffic improvements at the bottom of Rosendale Road near the Town of Colonie Town Line and discussing routing bicycle traffic onto nearby/parallel Niskayuna Drive instead of riding on Rosendale Road as it is higher volume and constraints prohibit the ability to install bicycle facilities in this location.

What are your top priorities?

P. Knutson noted that county-wide coordination is a priority. Also, the County is looking to work with owners along the Empire State Trail (EST) within the County to get better signage. Signage and mileage markers would be a huge benefit.

M. Flynn – Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) part of federal stimulus for larger projects replaces BUILD. The Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) is good for safety-related projects. Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) funds can be used when showing that non-motorized modes help with air quality. The State’s Regional Economic Development Councils (REDC) is also a potential source.

J. Levy noted that this coordination effort could be very helpful with funding as multi-municipal projects very often rank higher in scoring criteria than individual project funding requests.

Obstacles to Cooperation?

A Kohout noted that Scotia and the Town of Glenville go about infrastructure maintenance in different ways - how infrastructure is maintained, who should be maintaining it, differences in responsibilities for different locations, etc. In the Village, the property owner is responsible for sidewalk maintenance but that is not the same in the Town for the sidewalk infrastructure on the same road, for instance. This can be problematic, though staff has been able to work through these issues, but it is an issue with snow removal.

It was noted that in some locations where NYSDOT has jurisdiction, maintenance responsibility can be an issue.

P. Knutson noted that the County needs both advocacy and public buy-in for implementation to be successful.

M. Smith asked about policy development and implementation and how to ensure a policy is implemented. Mike Flynn noted that implementation roles need to be well defined and carried out by the responsible agency.

P. Knutson noted that there is a desire to reach out to the public 2-3 years after a Complete Streets project was implemented/installed to hear feedback on how it has worked and to gauge feelings about the project.

J. Hotaling– This discussion and the proposal for a more coordinated process are encouraging. Getting people together to discuss issues and provide education about safety is important.

P. Knutson – A County-wide collaboration effort can be a sounding board for municipal planners.

The workshop wrapped up with some discussion about advocating as a group with NYSDOT and looking for grants to implement multi-municipal projects.

Workshop #2 (May 6, 2021) – Summary Notes:

The Workshop kicked off with a presentation from J. Ceponis on the CDTC Capital District Trails Plan. She noted that there are on- and off-road connections in the plan and that trails often intersect with road networks. The goal is to install 200 miles of trails in the region through this plan.

CDTC has trail data for use in grant applications and trail user profiles – please reach out to CDTC if you would like this data. CDTC would like to see municipalities develop local plans that reference the regional trail plan and utilize the Trails Plan specifically in local planning efforts. L. Robertson asked if communities have utilized the plan in this way? J. Ceponis stated that Glenville has utilized the plan and M. Burns noted that the Town referenced the Capital District Trails Plan in their RFP. The consultants utilized the information in the local plan.

T. Carey noted that off-road trails are not a substitute for Complete Streets and many communities in the County have mature sidewalk networks. T. Carey asked if CDTC has resources to help intergovernmental integration of sidewalks and pedestrian networks? J. Ceponis stated that in addition to the Complete Streets program, there is the Linkage Program and the Technical Assistance Program. CDTC is also assisting communities with the development of ADA transition plans. C. Bauer noted that the Capital District Trails Plan could be a common thread among the governmental, advocate, and agency representative participants within Schenectady County. A. Clayman noted that designing streets to slow traffic is vital and stated that more people are speeding during the pandemic. J. Ceponis suggested the Trails Plan could be considered as the regional highway system with local plans acting as the local and connector routes to the regional system.

Measuring Success

M. Smith asked how we measure success with bike counts – who does the counts? C. Wallin noted that CDTC has counters and noted that he did not vote for pedestrian counts (*polling results are included below*) as a useful measure as it is harder to conduct, and it is easier to conduct a count on a trail. T. Carey stated that one option is to undertake sampling and do in-person counts, not utilizing a counter. It was noted that using drones or other sampling methodologies could be tried. A. Clayman noted that the Albany Bicycle Coalition sometimes does counts. Cycle Schenectady could assist by providing volunteers and assist with a demonstration project (the count could be the same day). K. Casey noted that bike to work and school day or traffic safety people can also undertake counts. M. Flynn suggested selecting 10-20 representative locations in the region and pick 1 week or month of the year for counts and undertake those at the same locations year after year under the same weather conditions to create a consistent count. It was recommended that locations focus on the main roads with a decent pedestrian and bicycle traffic. There are also national bicycle & pedestrian collection efforts. J. Levy noted that Niskayuna has used volunteers to undertake pedestrian counts twice over the last year.

Advocates' Priorities

T. Carey appreciates being included in this discussion. He noted that Safe Streets Schenectady came out of Schenectady United Neighborhoods and has a focus on intersections on unsafe streets. Speeding and reckless driving are major issues and the sidewalk network in the City is crumbling. He noted that Grand Boulevard is an opportunity for multi-municipal cooperation - it is hard to tell the boundary between Schenectady and Niskayuna and there is a clear need for the sidewalk to continue. Priorities for Safe

Street Schenectady are generally those of Complete Streets – safe routes for people of all ages and abilities to walk and bike with a focus on non-drivers. He also appreciates that the American Council for the Blind on the call. A. Clayman – agree on priorities discussed above. He mentioned that it is great to see implementation of the Schenectady Bike Master Plan and the Smart Cities Plan. He is concerned about the sustainability of the car culture. Equity and diversity are also issues among modes of transportation. There is a lack of diversity on the call and as Jen Ceponis noted that is also an issue with trail users. D. Stageman agrees with what has been said and would like to see improvements to the 5-way intersection at Ellis Hospital. There are no walk signs or crosswalks at this busy location. A. Clayman noted that Troy, Albany, Saratoga, and Schenectady are talking about creating a regional bike advocacy group.

Polling Questions

Polling questions were asked of participants in Workshop #2 to gauge potential Complete Streets-related demonstration projects or coordination opportunities within Schenectady County. A total of eighteen individuals participated in the meeting during these polls, not all participated in the polling. The poll questions and ideas presented are detailed in the slide images below with additional notes where discussion ensued.

Poll #1: Measuring Success

Measuring Success


- How would we know if Schenectady County has successfully implemented Complete Streets? What can we measure?

Responses:

| | |
|----|--|
| 11 | • More people walking/biking? |
| 8 | • Fewer crashes involving pedestrians/bicyclists? |
| 10 | • Greater sidewalk or pathway network coverage? |
| 6 | • Linear miles of bike lanes? |
| 0 | • You feel safer about your kids/parents/grandparents walking or biking? |
| 1 | • More foot traffic & patronage of local shops? |
| 0 | • Less driving? |
| 2 | • Increased property values? |

Poll #2: Erie Canal Ride

Where could we start?



Identify a potential demonstration project or other effort to improve connectivity for the Cycle the Erie Canal Bike Tour from the Trail to the SJCC?
July 17, 2021?


Responses:

| |
|--------------|
| Yes – 11 |
| No - 0 |
| Not Sure – 2 |

A. Clayman is involved in the Capital Region planning for this event. In 2021, there will only be 300 instead of the usual 600 riders who will be here in July. COVID has reduced the capacity of the event. The route will be through the Stockade, stopping at the Center Street Pub, following the trail, the ride continues to Nott Street, then Grand Boulevard to Dean Street to Providence Ave to get to the JCC. An issue was raised with the intersection of State Street and Washington Street. C. Wallin stated that he will work with A. Clayman and Steve Feeney on the State and Washington issue.

Poll #3: Connectivity to Libraries

Where could we start?



Connections to Libraries


Responses:

| |
|--------------|
| Yes – 10 |
| No - 1 |
| Not Sure – 0 |

A. Clayman noted that he participated in the Bike the Branches event in Brooklyn. There was a passport for each library and fundraisers were held – it was a good event. This idea has been discussed previously in Schenectady County. This could be a demonstration project or a fun day out in the future. D. Stageman noted that she liked the idea of the library event and that pedestrian education would be important during demonstration projects.

Poll #4: Connectivity to Schools

Where could we start?



Connections to schools

Responses:

- Yes – 11
- No - 0
- Not Sure – 0

Poll #5: Coordinated Individual Projects

Where could we start?



Niskayuna Bike & Pedestrian Safety Event –
Trying out a bike lane demo. through the neighborhood

Schenectady Stockade
Bike lane demo. connecting to State Street.

Coordinate Individual Demonstration Projects to take place the same week or month?

Responses:

- Yes – 11
- No - 0
- Not Sure – 0

A. Kohout liked the idea of coordinated demonstration project as it is hard to take on at the Village level. As a county-wide effort, this could be more feasible to implement.

Open Discussion

A. Kohout noted that Scotia does not have a striping machine and they are having trouble renting one or finding a contractor because the jobs required each year are too small. He asked how other municipalities do striping and asked if anyone owns one? C. Wallin noted that Schenectady and the County each own one. It may be feasible to share the machine through an intermunicipal agreement. P. Knutson noted that it may be useful to develop a multi-governmental agreement for striping and symbol installation and have the County put out a bid for the requested work every year. A. Kohout noted that there is no striping in the Village, and they were debating buying a machine. M. Burns said that Glenville would be interested in sharing a machine.

C. Bauer noted Capital Roots used to have templates for the demonstration project installation work that they assisted with in several communities across the Region. M. Flynn noted that Parks & Trails NY has templates, and they might also be a good resource for demonstration projects. T. Carey noted another idea is to undertake a demonstration project focused on the connections to parks (safe routes to parks). A. Clayman stated that on May 23rd the Bike Rescue is doing a bike giveaway in Hamilton Hill and there will be a bike fix-up day, possibly also a bike rodeo. It might be hard to do a demonstration project as well given the timing, but it is something to think consider. It was also noted that the Albany Bike Coalition has low stress routes mapped in Albany County and Schenectady County.

The map can be found at https://albanybicyclecoalition.com/albany_bike_map/.

A list of attendees can be found below.

| Contact | Agency |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Arnold Briscoe Jr. | Town of Glenville |
| Andrew Kohout | Village of Scotia |
| Carrie Ward | CDTC |
| Chris Bauer | CDTC |
| Chris Koetzle | Town of Glenville |
| Chris Wallin | City of Schenectady |
| Dale Lingenfelter | Town of Niskayuna |
| Dana Gilgore | Town of Glenville |
| Francis Wall | Town of Niskayuna |
| Gina Vierzbowski | Town of Glenville |
| James Pangburn | Town of Glenville |
| Jason Lecuyer | Schenectady County |
| Jennifer Ceponis | CDTC |
| John Lubrant | Schenectady County |
| Josh Hawley | Town of Niskayuna |
| Jim Martin | Town of Glenville |
| Jr Hotaling | |
| Kimberly Waldin | Schenectady County |
| Kristin Diotte | City of Schenectady |
| Lauren Stairs | Schenectady County |
| Laura Robertson | Town of Niskayuna |
| Lynn Walkuski | Town of Glenville |
| Matt Smith | City of Schenectady |
| Matthew Yetto | Town of Niskayuna |
| Matthew Weise | Town of Glenville |
| Melissa Cherubino | Town of Glenville |
| Mike Burns | Town of Glenville |
| Paul Sheldon | Schenectady County |
| Peter Comenzo | Town of Rotterdam |
| Peter Knutson | Schenectady County |
| Ray Smith | Town of Niskayuna |
| Steve Feeney | Schenectady County |
| Thomas Coppola | Town of Glenville |
| Art Clayman - President | Cycle Schenectady |
| Tom Carey, President | Schenectady Neighborhood Association |
| Delanne Stageman | Goose Hill Neighborhood Assn. |
| Kathy Casey | American Council for the Blind |
| Mike Flynn | Sam Schwartz |
| Katherine Ember | Planning4Places |
| James Levy | Planning4Places |