



To: Yixuan Lin, Monroe County Planning

From: Katie Darcy
Tom Robinson

Date: August 26, 2022

Re: Stakeholder Interviews Summary

Bergmann conducted nine stakeholder focus group interviews to gain insight on what needs and opportunities there are in the County regarding active transportation, and how varying interest groups and entities perceive active transportation and its benefits. The focus groups interviewed included:

- New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT)
- Monroe County Department of Transportation (MCDOT)
- Monroe County Parks Department & New York State Parks
- Local Municipalities
- Colleges & Universities
- The Aging Community
- Transit & Micromobility (Regional Transit Service (RTS) & Hoppr)
- The Disability Community
- Bicycle Advocacy Groups

These interviews were conducted virtually and are summarized below. Full transcripts* of each interview are available as an appendix to this summary.

*A transcript for the disability community interview is not available.

NYSDOT

Participants:

- Lora Leon, Transportation Analyst, NYSDOT Region 4
- Caroline Carrion-Rivera, Assistant Engineer, NYSDOT Region 4
- Matthew Oravec, Civil Engineer II, NYSDOT Region 4
- Paul Spitzer, Regional Design Engineer, NYSDOT Region 4

Key Takeaways:

- Constituents are concerned about bicycle and pedestrian safety and having space for everyone on the road.
- There are varying levels of treatment appropriate for different types of roadway environments (i.e., rural, urban, etc.)



- Over the past ten years there has been increased community acceptance of road diets and installing bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The nation has become more active, which has raised awareness and interest.
- A challenge that faces NYSDOT is that often their constituents are looking for an engineering or design solution where none exists due to roadway constraints or the existing development pattern, and it's more about outreach and education.
- A particular challenge is when community members ask the DOT to reduce speed limits, without understanding that changing the legal speed limit does not always change driver behavior.
- Consistency in vehicle speed is important for pedestrian safety and setting expectations of travel behavior, and that is challenging to get across to community members.
- NYSDOT is not opposed to lowering the operational speed of traffic through design interventions but is opposed to lowering speed limits when there are no changes to the character of the roadway. This often has no impact on operational speeds.
- Bus stop locations have a significant influence on pedestrian crashes in urban areas, particularly when they are crossing in front of the bus and approaching vehicles cannot see them.
- Project prioritization at NYSDOT is based on level of risk. If a location is deemed high risk, it's often because there is higher level of pedestrian activity, and therefore a higher risk of having an incident and more need for multi-modal improvements. However, high risk areas often also include areas of lower pedestrian volumes, but with more vehicular traffic and speeding issues – such as major arterials in suburban or rural areas.
- A Complete Streets policy should include a complete maintenance program.
- Sidewalks and bicycle facilities should be maintained as well as roadways during the winter months – and before the peak commute hours.
- An equitable active transportation network must prioritize maintenance.
- Incremental improvements are also important to fill gaps in the system.

Monroe County DOT (MCDOT)

Participants:

- Tom Frys, Director of Transportation, County Highway Superintendent, Monroe County DOT
- Tom Polech, Deputy Director of Transportation, Chief of Traffic Signal Engineering & Operations, Monroe County DOT
- Scott Leathersich, Senior Transportation Planner, Monroe County DOT

Key Takeaways:

- MCDOT supports the development of shared shoulders for bike travel but does not support the development of formal bike lanes. This is due in part to the concern that they do not allow for emergency vehicles and delivery trucks stopping along the edge of the roadway.
- MCDOT is increasing its implementation of video detection systems at intersections – which will pick up bicyclists. It is often cheaper to maintain these systems in the long-term than to have to maintain subsurface vehicle detection loops.



- There has been an uptick in the installation of new technology such as Leading Pedestrian Intervals (LPI), High Visibility Crosswalks (HVC), and Rectangular Rapid Flash Beacons (RRFB) on County roads.
- MCDOT has a policy for implementing RRFBs, but not LPIs.
- MCDOT is considering widening the width of striping edge lines, and thus reducing the appearance of the width of the travel lane.
- MCDOT maintains a list of roadways that are eligible / should be considered for a road diet. There is some community push back on these projects often, mainly regarding traffic flow and potential congestion.
- MCDOT is not responsible for snow removal – the Towns maintain roadways during the winter.
- There is a need for increased coordination with the local municipalities regarding funding for incorporating multi-modal improvements in MCDOT projects and maintenance agreements for sidewalks, bike lanes, etc.
- There is a significant opportunity for integrating all the Town's bicycle and pedestrian recommendations and potential projects into the Countywide ATP. It would be much easier for the County to reference a single document.
- Virtual engagement has turned out to be very effective for MCDOT – they will continue to use it as we move away from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Monroe County & NYS Parks

Participants:

- Pat Meredith, Director, Monroe County Parks
- Bob Kiley, Deputy Director, Monroe County Parks
- Chris Kirchmaier, Assistant Director, Monroe County Parks
- Chris Morris, Statewide Trails Program Planner, NYS Parks

Key Takeaways:

- E-bikes are becoming much more popular, and there is often a lot of uncertainty regarding where they are allowed to travel along roadways, within parks, and on trails.
- Class I and II e-bikes can go up to 20 MPH and are allowed in New York State.
- Class III e-bikes can go up to 25 MPH and are only permitted in New York City.
- Right now, Class I and II e-bikes are allowed on the Empire State Trail, but municipalities can make their own regulations surrounding e-bike use within their communities (including along the trail).
- It would be good for Monroe County to develop their own guidance surrounding e-bike usage that municipalities can rely on or alter.
- It is essential to continue to develop on-road bike and pedestrian connections to the parks system in the County.
- One area of particular interest is developing connectivity between Bay Park West, Tryon Park, Ellison Park, and Lucien Morin Park.



- The Canalway Trail is lacking a connection with the 390 trail.
- The Parks department would also like to continue to develop off-road connections between parks, such as along railroad rights-of-way.
- The Genesee Regional Off-Road Cyclists (GROC) has been an excellent partner to Monroe County Parks and is a great community asset for supporting more cycling in the community.
- There is a need for a trail coordinator at the Monroe County Parks Department who can coordinate with other departments, identify needs, and help to continue to develop the network of trails and parks across the County.

Municipalities (Pittsford & Penfield)

Participants:

- Kerry Ivers, Director of Developmental Services, Town of Penfield
- Doug Derue, Director of Planning, Zoning, & Development, Town of Pittsford

Key Takeaways:

- Street trees are very important for traffic calming and comfortable travel spaces. There have been instances in which County and/or State DOT will not implement street trees due to concerns of vehicles hitting them and/or visually obstructing the roadway.
- It is very important to tie funding and implementation to active transportation plans.
- Transit must be considered in active transportation planning, including outside of Rochester in development centers.
- The Town of Penfield requires developers to either a) install sidewalks on every project or b) contribute to a sidewalk fund that will serve more sidewalk installation elsewhere in the Town.
- The County should look at publicly owned properties such as public utility land, school properties, etc. (that are not parks), and identify potential cross-municipal connections.
- More connections are needed to the Canalway Trail within the Towns.
- The intersection of Clover and Jefferson in Pittsford is a major center of activity but is incredibly dangerous for bicyclists and pedestrians due to high speeds, high traffic volumes, and long crossing distances.
- There needs to be a stronger connection to the Auburn Trail across the Canal in Pittsford.
- Municipalities need guidance surrounding e-bike usage.
- There needs to be more coordination between the County and municipalities regarding projects and planning.



Colleges & Universities

Participants:

- Andrea Walton, Manager of Transportation Services, University of Rochester (UR)
- Quent Rhodes, Associate Vice President, Facilities, Monroe Community College (MCC)

Key Takeaways:

- There is a sustainability plan underway at UR which includes many active transportation initiatives. The key focus for these initiatives is improving access to the River Campus.
- UR would like to incentivize less parking on campus, and more multi-modal commuting. Currently, the University is piloting a free bus pass for PhD students living off campus and employees who would otherwise need a parking permit to park on campus.
- The MCC Facilities Master Plan emphasizes connections between the Downtown and Brighton Campuses. It also focuses on improved drop-off zones on campus for vehicles.
- There are plenty of identified projects for enhancing mobility at MCC outlined in the Facilities Master Plan – however there is a lack of funding to implement them.
- There is a significant need for sidewalk improvements at MCC.
- Signage is fading and failing on the Brighton MCC Campus – there is a signage master plan in place.
- Not many students or employees ride their bikes to the Brighton MCC Campus.
- It would be good to identify trail connections to Rochester's college campuses.
- There is a food desert around MCC's campus – there is no dining on campus near the residential halls, nor are there bus stops near the residential halls for residents to access dining in other areas of Town. This makes it difficult for residents without cars to safely access food options nearby.
- UR currently has Hopr bikes on campus – they are mostly used on the River Campus. They are not allowed within the inner areas of the River Campus or Medical Campus – there are designated drop off zones at the edges of the campuses.
- There are issues with vehicles speeding around the Downtown campus – conflicting with people crossing Morrie Silver Way to the MCC parking lot. Cars have hit the corner of the building at the corner of Plymouth Ave and Morrie Silver Way.

Aging Community

Participants:

- Neeci Packard, Lifespan Rochester
- Bill McDonald, United Way Rochester
- Steve Newcomb, Monroe County Office for the Aging
- Leanne Rorick, Aging Alliance



Key Takeaways:

- Transportation is a top five need for seniors – there is a significant driver shortage for medical services.
- Most trips for seniors are geared towards medical appointments and the grocery store.
- Snow removal in outdoor spaces surrounding senior living is crucial. There should be enforcement of the requirement for private individuals to clear the sidewalk in front of their homes in Rochester.
- There is also a need for benches and shelters as places to rest.
- Access to emergency services is also essential – such as the blue light boxes on college campuses.
- It would be nice to have accessible trails for seniors with wide widths and maintained surfaces.
- Crossing roads safely and with enough time is also a challenge for seniors.
- Bike share should be expanded near senior living centers and should consider the inclusion of three-wheel bikes to improve accessibility for older populations.
- The cubes that are currently present as seating options at some of the bus stations throughout the County are not supportive enough for the aging population.

Transit & Micromobility

Participants:

- Julie Boasi, Director of Service Planning, Regional Transit Service (RTS)
- Jasmine Meyers, Planner, Hopr
- Josh Squire, Founder & CEO, Hopr

Key Takeaways:

- RTS is currently subsidizing Hopr operations through a three-year Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) grant. The grant is good through 2023.
- RTS wanted to coordinate bike share for their full service area, which was the impetus for the partnership with Hopr.
- Some municipalities are hesitant to implement Hopr stations in their communities.
- There is a role for the County to support bike share, particularly within County rights-of-way.
- The County should develop guidance for local municipalities about how to implement bike share stations such as sample policy language, etc.
- Hopr cannot be self-sustained in Rochester due to low trip volumes. Therefore, they rely on sources of funding through municipalities, RTS, grants, and sponsorship from local institutions.
- Hopr feels that there is an appetite for micromobility in the County, which can be supported by installation of protected bike lanes, and connections to major trail systems.
- There is an educational component of bike share systems that is required in the County.
- There is a lot of hoarding of bikes on private property, particularly in the City. This is not because people are trying to steal the bikes, rather they want to make sure they have a bike available for them when they need it.



- A potential solution for bike hoarding may be some sort of subscription model where individuals can rent a bike for a longer period of time. Could be subsidized for low-income residents.
- There is a lack of resources at the Town and Village level to coordinate implementation of the Hopr system. A potential solution is the development of a County-level board for micromobility.
- It is important to include micromobility, bus stops, etc. during development review processes.
- It would be helpful for Hopr to have a point person for communication with the County.
- There is a disconnect between public funding opportunities and private operators of micromobility.

Disability Community

Participants:

- Luticha Doucette, Owner, Catalyst Consulting

Key Takeaways:

- Compliance with ADA standards does not always equate to comfortable / easy travel for all users.
- Design should start with the wheelchair in mind – a bike can go wherever a wheelchair can go, but not always vice versa.
- Grand Rapids, Michigan’s riverwalk and the Chicago riverwalk are great examples of accessible design, particularly in regard to creating meaningful connections to the rest of the city.
- There are barriers along the Canalway Trail for wheelchair users.
- Color distinction can be a useful tool to indicate the presence of steps for wheelchair users.
- Lighting and ways to signal for help are also important along trails and pathways.
- Signage should be implemented to promote awareness of the presence of wheelchairs along the roadway.
- Educational campaigns are also essential to promote awareness.
- Wayfinding signage and identifying landmarks are important for wheelchair users.
- Tactile warning strips can be very slippery during wet or snowy conditions for wheelchair users and can result in wheelchair users falling into intersections.
- A potential alternative solution to tactile warning strips is porous textured pavement.
- There should be priority snow removal in areas where there are concentrations of disabled residents.
- ADA accessible boat launches often need staffing so someone can take away the wheelchair, store it, assist as needed, etc.
- There should be considerations in roadway design about how to preserve the conditions of wheelchairs and other assistance technology, just as we consider the impacts of roadway conditions on vehicles.
- There should be enforcement for sidewalk maintenance during the winter months – or potentially more sidewalk plows.
- Too much salt on the sidewalks can result in difficulty navigating a wheelchair.



Bicycling Advocacy Groups

Participants:

- Kecia McCullough, Black Girls Do Bike Rochester (BGDB)
- Rashad Smith, Roc Freedom Riders

Key Takeaways:

- The goal of BGDC is to get women on bikes – there is a hesitancy among women, and particularly women of color, to get on a bike due to safety concerns.
- BGDB starts with having women riding on the Canalway Trail because it is safe and easy to navigate.
- It is important to understand and emphasize the link between active transportation and mental well-being.
- When women are happy, healthy and safe, it supports families, and entire communities' sense of happiness, health, and safety.
- Roc Freedom Riders was originally organized as a way to protest police brutality in black and brown communities and fight for racial equity, justice, diversity, and inclusion.
- Cycling classes can help individuals learn the rules of the roadway and get more comfortable biking.
- We need to develop a cycling culture within Rochester – which will help foster a sense of inclusivity and support for more infrastructure.
- If everyone was equipped with a bicycle within the City of Rochester, it might help foster this culture.
- Often bikes are stolen – mostly because that person is looking for a mode of transportation. Giving bikes out to everyone would foster a sense of ownership in our cyclist culture.
- Just getting more bikes out on the road will help to foster a cycling culture.
- Complete Streets policies are important to not only support active transportation, but also to inspire residents and foster a sense of pride in their communities.
- Complete Streets projects can also help to foster and enhance the arts culture in Rochester.
- Ideally, there would be many more protected bike lanes across the City.
- Often in Rochester black and brown people are harassed while riding bikes.
- It is important to consider the impacts of police interaction with minority cyclists – often they can be targeted for infractions such as not having a bell on their bike, etc., which sometimes leads to police violence.
- It is important to include law enforcement in these types of planning efforts so they can understand how they can train officers to engage with bicyclists.
- The voices and local expertise of community members must be heard and included to create meaningful change during planning efforts such as the Countywide Active Transportation Plan.
- Education and awareness of resident's ability to influence the results of these planning processes is essential.