

# Walkable Community Workshop

held: November 1, 2006

## Town of Dover, Morris, County



submitted to:  
**North Jersey  
Transportation  
Planning Authority**

submitted by:



in association with:



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# *Walkable Community Workshop Summary*

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### **I Purpose of the Workshop**

The North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) contracted with the RBA Group and the National Center for Bicycling & Walking to conduct a series of half-day workshops, which were held in the thirteen counties in the NJTPA region in addition to the City of Newark and Jersey City. The workshops were designed to educate and instruct advocates, residents, and professionals to identify barriers to walking and improve pedestrian safety in each of the communities.

Each workshop consisted of four parts: 1) an initial briefing (for the consultants) by local stakeholders; 2) a presentation by the consultants on best practices of walkable communities; 3) a guided walking audit of a study area identified by the local host; and 4) small group sessions from which recommendations for improvements are made. The outcome of each workshop is to identify and prioritize specific improvements that will increase safety and accessibility for pedestrians. This can serve as a catalyst for local communities and county representatives to implement the improvements among themselves and to develop problem statements, which can be submitted to NJTPA for funding of the recommendations. A sample agenda is included as Appendix A.

Each county coordinated with local representatives to develop an invitation list of a broad range of stakeholders including local leaders, planners and engineers, interested business owners, and residents. A listing of workshop participants is included as Appendix D.

### **II Workshop Methodology**

Each workshop begins with an initial briefing by select local stakeholders. Typically, this group includes the mayor, the police chief, the county planner, and representatives from the department of public works—among other groups. During this briefing the consultants are alerted to existing pedestrian safety hazards, locations of walkable destinations (libraries, schools, municipal buildings, shopping, employment centers, parks), existing plans for infrastructure improvements, and any other considerations relevant to the outcome of the workshop. The consultants also get a chance to ask questions of the local representatives during this informal briefing which was conducted with aid of an aerial map of the municipality and walking audit area.

Approximately one hour of the workshop is devoted to a PowerPoint presentation of the elements of the walkable community. The presentation begins with an overview of typical barriers to walking. Also discussed are the reasons people commonly cite for not walking. Those reasons form the basis of the second part of the presentation in which best practices of walkable communities are described. The practices range from the easy and inexpensive to implement, to the longer-range solutions, to the novel ideas that can add character to a neighborhood. The final portion of the presentation is dedicated to implementation strategies. Presented are: public health rationale for increasing physical activity, the economic benefits to the individual and the community for becoming more walkable, and the relationship between walkability and improved quality-of-life. Each presentation is customized by the consultant to reflect local conditions and concerns.

A guided walking audit follows the presentation. The walk follows a route designated by local officials and varies from



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an individual intersection to a one-mile-long corridor or more. For the walk each participant is issued a Post-It Note pad for recording observations and ideas during the walk. The purpose of the audit is to observe specific problem spots, as well as to point out features of the study area that are pedestrian friendly. The consultant stops at various points along the route and asks the group to make observations, and to suggest remedies. Attention is paid to ease of crossing the road, the quality of the walking experience, driver behavior, and connectivity between destinations—among other indicators.

The third part of the workshop is devoted to a 30-minute group mapping exercise. The participants divide into small groups and gather around street maps of the study area. The groups are challenged to denote the location of specific problems and to develop solutions. The groups are not constrained in the scope of their suggestions, nor are they asked to worry about jurisdiction, or cost of improvements. The groups are challenged to think beyond infrastructure improvements. A program that encourages more children to walk to school might be one example. Aiding in this exercise are the notes taken during the walking audit.

Finally, each group is asked to present its recommendations to the group at large. This is an interactive portion of the workshop and other participants are encouraged to comment on the suggestions presented. Once the groups have presented, the consultant moves the participants to identify what are the highest priority improvements of those discussed. Lastly, these priorities are recorded and each participant is challenged to offer what she/he will do to advance these initiatives.



### **III FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **A. Summary of Existing Conditions**

##### **1. Local Insights**

On Wednesday, November 1, 2006, a Walkable Community Workshop was held in the Town of Dover (Morris County) from 9:00 am until 12:30 pm. Mike Dannemiller from The RBA Group was the workshop facilitator for this event. The focus area of the workshop was Blackwell Street west of South Bergen Street and North Warren Street south of Route 46.

Mayor Dodd of Dover conducted an initial briefing. Dover has a major transit oriented development (TOD) project underway and is in the process of updating the circulation element of the Master Plan.

The TOD study (dated June 2006) recommends several phases of major redevelopment, the first of which is planned for the immediate area around the corridor studied during this workshop. Several of the concepts described in the TOD study will both enhance and compliment the walkability principles described during this workshop. The first phase of the redevelopment recommended in the TOD study is the Bassett Highway area, bounded by the Rockaway River. This will incorporate large-scale redevelopment, including a riverfront walkway.

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Dover is in the final stages of completing a circulation element for the Master Plan. This effort has been extended to include the comments and accommodations developed as part of this workshop.

Dover has an approximate population of 18,000 people, and covers just under three square miles of area. School children are not bused in Dover.

Dover is a major stop on the NJ Transit commuter rail line “Mid-Town Direct” and is the last stop for many of the scheduled trains, making the Dover station very popular with commuters.

Law enforcement estimates that only half of the motor vehicle accidents involving pedestrians had a citation issued to either the driver or the pedestrian, and the other half were categorized as “no fault” incidents.

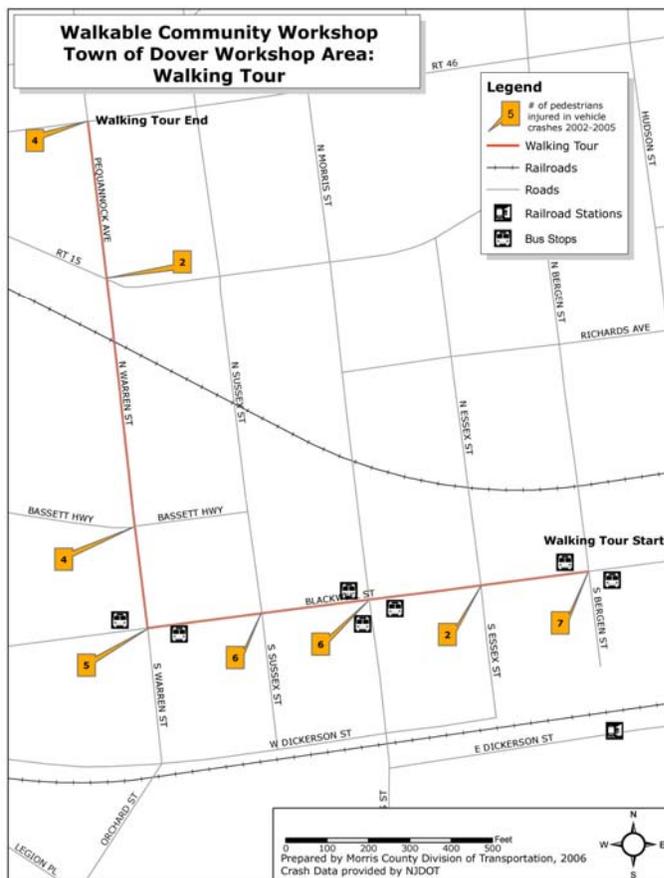
There are parking issues along the Blackwell Street corridor where vehicles are often double parked and pedestrians frequently cross at mid-block locations to gain direct access to their destinations. These types of violations are in disregard for traffic laws and personal safety. It was noted that these violations typically occur during the peak morning travel period.

Also noted by the participants is the fact that residents and church goers take advantage of the church lawn area by South Bergen Street for lounging and sunbathing. The church may prohibit this practice in the future.

### 2. Needs/Issues/Opportunities

The walking audit was completed in approximately one hour. The study area began at the Dover town hall (located between North Warren Street and North Sussex Street) and proceeded southeast along a seldom-used freight rail line that is proposed to be abandoned and redeveloped as a linear park. This line is currently owned by Morris County and leased to Morris & Erie rail line, and rail service may be relocated to a roughly parallel rail line elsewhere in Dover and the surrounding communities. Discontinuing rail service on this line would eliminate the current 12 at-grade rail crossing where rail workers presently have to flag down traffic at each intersection when trains cross the area. Morris County Park Commission is being considered for maintaining the proposed trail facility. The additional freight line siding that crosses North Warren Street, just north of the town hall, could also be removed, or incorporated into the proposed linear park.

The study group traveled along Blackwell Street, then along North Warren Street, and returned to the nearby town hall.



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The group made numerous stops along the walking route. Particular attention was paid to the following:

- The parking configuration along Blackwell Street including “tandem” parking with shared maneuvering area. This allows two adjacent spaces to each to be shorter than a standard space and allows for faster and easier parallel parking.
- The total number and close spacing of the bus stops in the commercial area along Blackwell Street was questioned. Having bus stops every two blocks may be excessive. Consideration should be given to consolidating the bus stops to one or two in each direction along the six block area. This would permit additional on-street customer parking in the commercial area. The existing reserved taxi parking spaces located adjacent to the taxi company on Blackwell Street, rather than by any major taxi patron destination such as the train station, should also be considered for relocation or elimination.
- Train station access across Blackwell Street.
- The roadway network along North Warren Street/Pequannock Avenue by Route 46 and Route 15 is planned to be reconfigured. This will cause new circulation patterns through the area.

The findings of the walking audit are as follows:

### **Issue Area: Safety**

Ensuring safety is the primary consideration for walkable communities. Crossings must be safe and well-marked. Motor vehicles must travel at appropriate speeds.

- Bicyclists riding on the sidewalk often create conflicts with pedestrians and cause conflicts with cars at intersections.
- Driver yield behavior is problematic at almost every crosswalk. Pedestrians typically wait for vehicles to clear the vicinity before crossing or cross between stopped vehicles.



### **Issue Area: Comfort**

Aesthetics are an important determinant in the decision of whether to walk. A well-designed pedestrian space encourages more walking.

- There is pedestrian-scale lighting present along the corridor.
- The sidewalk width varies greatly, but generally the width along Blackwell Street extends from building face to the curb and is adequate. The width drops along North Warren Street, especially to the north. There is a gap in the sidewalk network adjacent to the firehouse, where pedestrians are forced to either cross the street or walk in the roadway around emergency equipment.
- The sidewalk surface contains cracks and is heaving up in several locations.
- Overgrowth of vegetation/trees is a problem in several locations.
- Streetscape features are inconsistent.
- Curb side (sandwich board style) signs are located in the buffer area of the sidewalk sometimes obstructing pedestrian flow.

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### Issue Area: Convenience

Good routes and short distances between destinations encourage trips on foot and by bicycle.

- Good examples of municipal wayfinding signs are mounted on posts throughout the downtown area.
- Bicycle parking facilities are located at the train station only. Dover plans to install historically themed bicycle parking throughout the commercial area of town.
- No shelters at the designated transit stops were observed. Stops were generally located at the far side (departure from) intersections.
- Bicycle racks on buses are absent.
- Benches are sporadic throughout the corridor.
- Public restrooms and water fountains are absent.



### Issue Area: Access & Design

The pedestrian space must reflect the various levels of mobility. Proper design benefits all users, and allows all to participate in the community.

- Truncated domes are not present at most crosswalks. Walking surface is cracked and sidewalks are heaved up in several locations.
- Crosswalks and curb ramps generally do not align.



## B. Summary of Priority Recommendations & Next Steps

Of all the ideas and recommendations discussed, the Dover stakeholders agreed that the following five (5) should have the highest priority. A complete listing of recommendations, comments and feedback received can be found in Appendix B.

1. **Bike Lanes along Blackwell Street.** Striping bicycle lanes along Blackwell Street will help to increase safety for all roadway users. Bike lanes will encourage bicyclists to travel in the right direction, and not on the sidewalk. This will greatly minimize conflicts with pedestrians, and make the bicyclists more predictable to the motorists.
  - Stripe bike lanes along Blackwell Street. This will better manage conflicts with other traffic, and minimize conflicts with pedestrian traffic on the sidewalk.
  - Reduce the striped travel lane width to 10 feet in each direction. This will ensure that on-street parking will not be impacted.

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2. **Countdown signals.** There is a general perception that the existing traffic and pedestrian signals are not easily understood by pedestrians. Countdown pedestrian signals are a proven technique to convey a clear message to pedestrians about the traffic signal operation, and assist them in making informed decisions about their personal safety when crossing.

- Upgrade existing traffic signals to incorporate countdown pedestrian signal heads
- Provide placards that explain the countdown pedestrian signal operation
- Consider providing fully accessible pedestrian signals that also incorporate vibro-tactile and audible cues to pedestrians
- If the existing traffic signals are to be modified at all, they will likely have to be brought up to current NJDOT standards, including battery backup operation and camera detection rather than traditional in roadway loop detectors.



3. **Curb extensions (bulb-outs).** Many of the crosswalks are longer than they have to be, and could be shortened with well-designed curb extensions. Curb extensions reduce pedestrian exposure, improve visibility, and serve to slow traffic.

- Provide curb extensions at the mid-block crossing locations along Blackwell Street:
  - Bergen Street
  - Morris Street
  - Warren Street
- Intersection curb extensions should be considered to minimize the crossing distance along and across Blackwell Street, avoiding the bus stop locations.



4. **Pedestrian crossing of North Warren Street at town hall.**

The municipal employees and visitors to town hall currently park on the west side of North Warren Street. However, there is no striped crosswalk to assist pedestrians who cross North Warren Street at this location.

- Provide a high visibility ladder striped crosswalk across North Warren Street
- Consider a raised treatment such as a speed table or raised crosswalk to further emphasize the priority of the crosswalk. A raised treatment should be coordinated closely with emergency services (fire, police, etc.), but is not expected to be a major issue due to the extremely close proximity to the garage.
- Consider an in-roadway illuminated crosswalk.
- A center island median could be considered to further enhance pedestrian safety.



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5. **Complete sidewalk along firehouse.** The sidewalk network is generally complete throughout the study area with one major exception, in front of the firehouse on North Warren Street. The existing sidewalk terminates on either side of the firehouse, a location that often has emergency service vehicles and fire apparatus parked (see photo) or entering and exiting. This gap in the sidewalk network should be completed with a striped sidewalk similar to the treatments through the rest of the corridor.



- Provide a concrete sidewalk along North Warren Street past the firehouse.
- Ensure that any construction does not compromise the existing Rockaway River Bridge adjacent to the firehouse location. Use crosswalk striping if necessary to delineate the pedestrian realm across this busy driveway area.

Cautionary Note: The walkable community workshops were conducted over a half-day period and did not involve in-depth evaluation or engineering analysis of existing conditions. Accurate survey data/mapping, additional field evaluation and/or engineering analysis may be required prior to advancing the above recommendations. Agencies should be consulted for available engineering designs and applicable data.

The following table briefly summarizes the priority recommendations, associated benefits, and timeframes of completion. A lead agency for implementation has not been identified, but it is intended that appropriate local, county, and state agencies stakeholders will work together to advance the priority projects identified here.

| Project / Location   | Proposed Benefits  | Timeframe                 |
|--|--|---------------------------|
| <b>Bike lanes along Blackwell Street</b>                       | Minimize pedestrian conflicts on sidewalks and improve bicycle accommodation                                     | <b>Short</b>              |
| <b>Countdown signals</b>                                       | Provide clear information to pedestrians in crossing at signalized intersection                                  | <b>Medium</b>             |
| <b>Curb extensions (bulb-outs)</b>                             | Minimize conflicts between pedestrians and motor vehicles, reduce vehicle speeds, and reduce pedestrian exposure | <b>Long</b>               |
| <b>Pedestrian crossing of North Warren Street at Town Hall</b> | Provides accessibility and increased visibility of pedestrians   | <b>Short &amp; Medium</b> |
| <b>Complete sidewalk along firehouse</b>                       | Provides a consistent and convenient pedestrian network  | <b>Short</b>              |

Timeframe:

Short = < One Year

Medium = One to Two Years

Long = > Two Years

# APPENDICES

## Appendix A

**Agenda –**

| North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority   |  |                             |
|--|--|-----------------------------|
|   | <h3>Walkable Community Workshops Agenda</h3> |                             |
|  | <b><u>Module Length</u></b>                  | <b><u>Sample Agenda</u></b> |
| 1. Briefing with Mayor & Consultant Team   | 30 min                                       | 8:30 – 9:00                 |
| 2. Welcome by Mayor/Introductions/Workshop Overview  | 10 min                                       | 9:00 – 9:10                 |
| 3. Elements of a Walkable Community  | 60 min                                       | 9:10 – 10:10                |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barriers, benefits and real-world examples</li> <li>• Site Introduction &amp; Review</li> </ul> |  |                             |
| 4. Walking Audit   | 60 min                                       | 10:10 – 11:10               |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In field assessments</li> </ul>   |  |                             |
| 5. Design Solutions (Break-out Sessions)   | 30 min                                       | 11:10 – 11:40               |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small team working groups</li> </ul>  |  |                             |
| 6. Presentation of Recommendations   | 30 min                                       | 11:40 – 12:10               |
| 7. Priorities, Action Plan & Funding   | 15 min                                       | 12:10– 12:25                |
| 8. Next Steps, Questions & Wrap-up   | 5 min  | 12:25– 12:30                |
| 9. Adjourn   |  | 12:30                       |




## Appendix B

### **Breakout Group Comments & Feedback**

- The transit oriented development study includes a massing plan, and proposed phased development that incorporates parking decks, and residential high-rise units with first floor commercial with underground parking.
- A concept is being considered within Dover to construct a bypass to Route 46 to help minimize traffic backups along Blackwell Street.
- Bicycle racks are recommended to be located throughout the commercial area. Dover is adamant about ensuring that the racks fit into the historic context. Penny Farthing style (Hi Wheel) racks are the current preference, and can be considered public art even if bicycles are not parked at the racks.

### **Other Area Projects:**

- The New Jersey Department of Transportation has designed a plan to reconfigure several intersections and redirect traffic in the area of Pequannock Avenue (continuation of North Warren Street to the north) near Route 46, and by Route 15 and North Bergen Street. These projects will have traffic impacts throughout Dover.
- A new town hall is planned to be relocated across the Rockaway River from its current location. The current structure would be retained and the two buildings could be linked by a new civic area connected by a wide new pedestrian bridge over the Rockaway River.

### **Major Planning Considerations:**

- Dover recently completed a transit oriented development study. This included a major phased plan for large-scale redevelopment. Many of the ideas in this plan support walkable community goals. This includes train station access, which may incorporate a modern roundabout adjacent to the train station.
- Dover is in the final stages of completing a circulation element for the Master Plan. This effort has been extended to include comments and recommendations developed from this workshop.

## Appendix C

### Evaluation Criteria Checklist for Walking Study Area

#### **Safety**

##### ***Streets***

Is the posted speed limit in excess of 35 mph?  
Motor vehicle speed  
Driver yield behavior to pedestrians  
Lane widths and road characteristics

##### ***Crossings***

Conditions of crosswalks  
Crosswalk markings  
Other pedestrian-related signage

##### ***Intersections***

Traffic control devices  
Wide turn radii  
Poor sightlines  
Pedestrian signals

#### **Comfort**

Lighting (pedestrian-scale or overhead)  
Sidewalk width (appropriate for adjacent uses)  
Maintenance of sidewalk surface  
Overgrowth of vegetation/trees  
Consistency of streetscape  
Condition of adjacent properties  
Other sidewalk obstructions  
Presence of other pedestrians

#### **Convenience**

Wayfinding signage  
Connectivity of street layout  
Bicycle parking facilities  
Quality of bus stops/transit stops  
Bicycle racks on buses  
Benches  
Public restrooms and water fountains

#### **Access/Design**

Are crossings compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act?  
Alignment of crosswalks and curb cuts/curb ramps  
Timing of pedestrian phase for traffic lights (adequate crossing time)

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### Appendix D

#### **Project Team**

In conjunction with NJTPA, a team of consultants specializing in making communities more walkable conducted the Walkable Community Workshops. The RBA Group, based in Morristown, NJ, served as the local lead for the workshops with assistance from National Center For Bicycling and Walking (NCBW), based in Bethesda, MD who has completed similar workshops throughout the country.

If you would like further information regarding this workshop or other related efforts, please contact:

Ron Tindall, NJTPA  
973-639-8416  
[tindall@njtpa.org](mailto:tindall@njtpa.org)  
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Bettina Zimny, The RBA Group  
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Mark Plotz, National Center for Bicycling and Walking  
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[www.bikewalk.org/](http://www.bikewalk.org/)

John Hayes  
Morris County Planning  
973-829-8101  
[jhayes@co.morris.nj.us](mailto:jhayes@co.morris.nj.us)

Other websites that may helpful include:

New Jersey Department of Transportation  
[www.state.nj.us/transportation](http://www.state.nj.us/transportation)

League of American Bicyclists  
[www.bikeleague.org](http://www.bikeleague.org)

Active Living by Design  
[www.activelivingbydesign.org](http://www.activelivingbydesign.org)

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#### Attendee Listing

| <b>Name</b>          | <b>Organization</b>                             | <b>Phone Number/Email</b>  |
|----------------------|---|--|
| Mayor James P. Dodd  | Town of Dover                                   | <a href="mailto:jdodd@dover.nj.us">jdodd@dover.nj.us</a>                 |
| John Hayes           | Morris County Division of Transportation        |  |
| Jeffrey Barnish      | Barnish Properties                              | <a href="mailto:barnish@hotmail.com">barnish@hotmail.com</a>             |
| Michael Hantson      | Town Engineer/Planner                           | <a href="mailto:mhanson@dover.nj.us">mhanson@dover.nj.us</a>             |
| William Isselin      | Town of Dover, Code Enforcement Officer         | <a href="mailto:wisseline@dover.nj.us">wisseline@dover.nj.us</a>         |
| Andrea DeRose        | Morris County Division of Transportation        | <a href="mailto:aderose@co.morris.nj.us">aderose@co.morris.nj.us</a>     |
| Eleni Giannikopoulos | Morris County Division of Engineering           |  |
| Paul McGrath         | Town of Dover, Planning Board Chairman          |  |
| Frank Poolas         | Town of Dover, Alderman                         |  |
| Donald Hertel        | Board of Transportation Member                  | <a href="mailto:dhertel@optonline.net">dhertel@optonline.net</a>         |
| Chuck Latini         | Heyer Gruel and Associates, Planning Consultant |  |
| Ray Valle            | ReMax Dover                                     | <a href="mailto:rayvalle@remax.com">rayvalle@remax.com</a>               |
| Luis Acevedo         | Town of Dover, Public Works Superintendent      | <a href="mailto:lacedo@dover.nj.us">lacedo@dover.nj.us</a>               |
| Peter Ugalde         | Dover Police Dept.                              | <a href="mailto:ugalde@doverpolice.nj.org">ugalde@doverpolice.nj.org</a> |
| Ron Tindall          | NJTPA   | <a href="mailto:rontindall@njtpa.org">rontindall@njtpa.org</a>           |
| Mike Dannemiller     | The RBA Group                                   | <a href="mailto:mdannemille@rbagroup.com">mdannemille@rbagroup.com</a>   |