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Conclusions

The NJ 124 Corridor is a highly used, heavily congested region. Limited parking availability at three area NJ TRANSIT commuter rail stations – Chatham, Madison, and Convent – prompted this transit access study to investigate potential measures to improve mobility in the region and preserve the corridor's value.

The parking data collection conducted provided a detailed understanding of parking operations at the three commuter rail stations. It was found that commuters typically arrive early and park for extended periods of time (ten hours or more) at all three stations. Parking at Chatham and Madison Stations is nearly at capacity; however, Convent Station has some excess parking capacity in its various lots.

Pedestrian and bicycle traffic accessing the stations is minimal in comparison to automobile traffic. Sidewalks and crosswalks in the study area are less than optimal, and there is little well-established bicycling infrastructure.

Multiple deficiencies have been identified that hinder safe, efficient, and reliable access to the stations. These deficiencies can be classified as either minor or major deficiencies with the majority of them being simple problems that can be easy to fix.

Some examples of minor deficiencies that could be mitigated with low cost, high impact improvements:

- Pedestrian and bicycle safety issues that could be solved by restriping or adding signage.
- Pedestrian and bicycle connectivity that could be enhanced through additional signage or short extensions of trails/ sidewalks.
- Parking shortages that could be alleviated through improved parking management.
- Schedule inconsistencies between connecting transit services that could be rectified through minor adjustments to schedules and operations.

Examples of major deficiencies which could require more medium to long term and expensive improvements:

- Provision of new sidewalks, roadway turning lanes, or dedicated bike lanes.
- Parking shortages that would require major modifications to the parking lot (in ground construction or modification of the lot's geometry) to resolve.
- The need for additional transit connectivity that could be solved through the introduction of a new feeder-bus service.

Moreover, an analysis of existing and future land use was performed in order to evaluate the potential for transit-oriented development (TOD), a long-term strategy to minimize existing station access issues. It was found that Chatham and Madison Stations have the highest potential for TOD without the inclusion of commuter parking due to the proximity to their respective town centers, existing land use patterns, and demographic and economic factors. Convent Station offers a developer the best location for TOD with commuter parking.

Over 150 access-related improvements have been developed and recommended for the NJ 124 study area, based on analysis of existing transportation conditions and land use as well as stakeholder and public feedback. These improvements, ranging from low cost/ early implementation strategies to high cost/ long term strategies would make a significant improvement in the accessibility of Chatham, Madison, and Convent Stations while also improving the safety and mobility of the NJ 124 corridor and surrounding roadways. As described in this report, not only do deficiencies exist with respect to station access in the study corridor, but future forecasts indicate that there will continue to be a parking capacity problem amongst the three study area stations.

It is recommended that the three host municipalities, Chatham Borough, Madison Borough, and Morris Township, review the potential improvements included in this report. Significant effort should be made to increase access to stations by non-automotive modes, including pedestrian, bicycle, carpool, transit, and kiss and ride improvements. Each of these improvements would require additional study and development prior to implementation. In addition, a coordinated effort amongst the study area municipalities would be required to achieve the improvements' full potential. Improvements that encourage non-automotive access to stations should be implemented while more significant improvements, including the addition of parking within the corridor, are planned and funded.

Ultimately, new parking capacity will be required in the study area and a coordinated approach between not only the station-hosting municipalities but also the adjacent municipalities is recommended. Since parking structures are difficult to publicly fund, it is recommended that the host municipalities consider the TOD scenarios that were developed as a potential funding source. While the analyses presented in this report assumed a "worst case" scenario in which each municipality provided for the full high-end forecasted deficit range of parking spaces (500 spaces),

it is likely that this forecast deficit will not only be diminished by the implementation of the non-automotive access improvements, but that the remaining parking demand may be divided among the three station areas. As such, before further action on adding parking capacity is taken, it is recommended that all strategies be considered.

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