



**Local Concept Development Study for Hudson County
JFK (Kennedy) Boulevard
Pavonia Avenue to St. Paul's Avenue
Jersey City, Hudson County**



PUBLIC INFORMATION CENTER No. 1 – SUMMARY REPORT

DATE PREPARED: July 15, 2020

TIME: 5:00 p.m – 7:00 p.m (formal presentation at 5:30 p.m.)

LOCATION: Online GoToMeeting, open format

ATTENDEES: NJTPA, Hudson County, NJDOT, GPI, Stokes representatives and members of the public

Thomas Malavasi	Hudson County Engineer
Jose Sieira	Hudson County Engineering Department
Sean Keating	Hudson County Engineering Department
Byron Nicholas	Hudson County Engineering Department
Sascha Frimpong	North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA)
Patricia Newton	NJTPA
Sarbjit Kahlon	NJTPA
Pamela Garrett	NJDOT – Bureau of Environmental Resource Programs
Bernie Boerchers	Greenman-Pedersen, Inc. (GPI)
Julia Steponanko	GPI
Nicole Pace-Addeo	Stokes Creative Group, Inc. (Stokes)

XX Public Attendees

PURPOSE: Solicit comments and/or concerns from the public on the existing conditions in support of the Purpose and Need.

MEETING SUMMARY: After a brief summary of the meeting format by Ms. Pace-Addeo, Mr. Boerchers presented via PowerPoint the Project Team, project delivery process, existing conditions, crash and traffic data and analyses, the 2015 Road Safety Audit, stakeholder survey results, work completed to date and next steps. The following summarizes the key points of discussion (grouped by topic):

Pedestrians

1. It was inquired if the JFK Boulevard intersections with Pavonia Avenue and Newark Avenue have all pedestrian phases, and if so, can they receive pedestrian scramble treatments such as diagonal crosswalks. The Project Team confirmed that these intersections do have all pedestrian phases, i.e. a scramble, whereby pedestrians can cross diagonally through the intersection. The Project Team added that diagonal crosswalks can be investigated as part of the alternatives analysis.
2. It was stated that pedestrians need to wait a long time to cross Kennedy Boulevard at Pavonia Avenue. It was inquired if wait times to cross Kennedy Boulevard were measured as part of the field investigation. The Project Team stated that pedestrians wait at most three signal phases (*phasing: JFK Boulevard lead left, JFK Boulevard right of way and Pavonia Avenue right of way*) to cross under an all pedestrian phase. They are then given approximately 30 seconds to perform their crossing which is in conformance with the MUTCD. The attendee did not feel that the

existing crossing time was sufficient. It was agreed that the Project Team would evaluate the crossing time during Concept Development.

3. It was inquired if the traffic signals at the intersections of Kennedy Boulevard and Tonnelle Avenue Ramp and Kennedy Boulevard and St. Paul's Avenue operate on pedestrian recall. The Project Team stated that the traffic signal at Kennedy Boulevard and St. Paul's Avenue should be on pedestrian recall but that it will be confirmed. They added that the intersection of Kennedy Boulevard and Tonnelle Avenue Ramp is under the jurisdiction of the New Jersey Department of Transportation.
4. It was inquired if the Walk signals along the corridor require actuation via a pushbutton or if they are on pedestrian recall. The Project Team stated the Walks signals along Kennedy Boulevard between Pavonia Avenue and St. Paul's Avenue are on pedestrian recall.

Bicyclists

5. It was inquired if it was possible to extend the existing protected bike lane along Bergen Avenue, which currently ends at Sip Avenue, onto Kennedy Boulevard through the project limits. The Project Team stated that a protected bike lane would be considered as part of the alternatives analysis. They also stated that there would be trade-offs between the bike lane(s), parking, turning lanes, travel lanes, curb extensions, etc. that will need to be evaluated based on stakeholder and public input along with engineering considerations.
6. It was stated that bicyclists currently ride on the sidewalks due to the lack of bicycle lanes and the dangerous conditions for bicyclists on Kennedy Boulevard.
7. Some of the attendees stated that Kennedy Boulevard, as it is currently configured, caters to motorists at the detriment of pedestrians and bicyclists. It was also stated that many of the households in Jersey City do not own a vehicle and therefore walk, bike, or use transit to travel within and through the corridor for a multitude of non-recreational reasons.
8. It was noted that removal of parking in front of businesses would have a negative impact on the same, especially spaces reserved for handicap parking.

Vehicles

9. It was noted that excessive speed, especially along this section of Kennedy Boulevard, is an ongoing concern. It was inquired why reducing speed is not a goal or objective, and if the project would consider traffic calming. The Project Team stated that traffic calming would be investigated along Kennedy Boulevard including rumble strips, curb extensions, etc. The Project Team also noted that this is also an enforcement issue. The Project Team will direct this concern to the Hudson County Sheriff's Office.
10. It was inquired if this project would address the food trucks that park along this section of Kennedy Boulevard. It was stated that food trucks are permitted to park for up to two (2) hours in one spot before needing to relocate, but JCPD does not enforce this rule. It was added that as a result of the food trucks occupying parking spaces, there is double and triple parking along Kennedy Boulevard. It was also noted that JCPD does not have much presence in this area. The Project Team noted that the food truck parking is an enforcement issue and will direct this concern and the concern regarding police presence to the Hudson County Sheriff's Office.
11. It was stated that the White Castle, which is located along Kennedy Boulevard between Newark Avenue and Van Winkle Avenue / Brooks Place, has a 24-hour drive-thru that frequently queues onto Kennedy Boulevard. It was also noted that White Castle is planning to redevelop their site which will be discussed during the Journal Square Community Association CAP meeting on August 5, 2020.

12. A concern was raised that a redesign of Kennedy Boulevard would shift traffic from Kennedy Boulevard onto Tonnelle Avenue which is predominantly residential. It was added that truck traffic between Charlotte Circle (Route 1&9) and Kennedy Boulevard is prohibited but is still a huge problem. It was inquired what can be done with this redesign to discourage truck traffic on residential streets? The Project Team noted that while they cannot control all diverting traffic, traffic calming could be investigated as noted in Item 9.

Transit/PATH

13. The following concerns were expressed for the intersection of Kennedy Boulevard and Pavonia Avenue: (1) lack of signage at PATH designating passenger pickup and drop-off areas, (2) persistent, chronic double parking on both sides of Pavonia Avenue for passenger pickup and drop-off, and (3) poor lighting on the west side of the intersection. The Project Team stated that they would investigate the lighting concern, but that the PATH signing will need to be addressed by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PANYNJ).
14. It was inquired if a dedicated bus lane is within the scope of this project since Journal Square is one of the largest NJ Transit bus terminals in New Jersey. The Project Team stated that it could be considered as part of the alternatives analysis.
15. It was requested that the Project Team coordinate with PANYNJ regarding the redesign of the PATH station. The Project Team noted that they will coordinate with the PANYNJ on any proposed improvements to the PATH station.

Drainage / Streetscape / Green Infrastructure

16. Drainage issues were noted especially at the intersection of Kennedy Boulevard and St. Paul's Avenue. It was noted that many residents in this area experience flooding in their homes due in part to excess surface runoff. The Project Team stated that the study is not focused on stormwater management, but isolated drainage issues could be addressed as part of the study.
17. It was inquired if the County plans to work with the City to plant more trees along Kennedy Boulevard as well as build green infrastructure such as landscaped curb extensions and bioswales to help mitigate threats posed by climate change. The Project Team replied that these upgrades could be investigated during Concept Development but that it should be noted that the County would not maintain these types of facilities and that a jurisdictional agreement with the City or others would be necessary regarding all future maintenance.
18. It was inquired if the County or the Project Team coordinated with the Journal Square Special Improvement District (SID) about bioswale maintenance. The Project Team stated that public / private maintenance is a consideration of the County.

General / Other

19. It was inquired if the Project Team is coordinating with the utility companies. Residents noted ongoing utility work along this section of Kennedy Boulevard. The Project Team stated that the current utility work is not for this project and that the Project Team coordinates with the utility companies during Concept Development. Mr. Dwyer from PSE&G added that meeting participants with PSE&G related inquiries can contact him at richard.dwyer@pseg.com and (551) 233-3257. He added that he will keep the County advised of any communications.
20. It was stated that the sidewalk areas along this section of Kennedy Boulevard are dark at night. The Project Team stated that current illumination levels and solutions will be investigated during Concept Development.
21. It was inquired how long the survey is open for responses and the deadline for official comments. The Project Team responded that the survey will remain open throughout Concept Development

and requested any comments on the project area by August 31, 2020 so input can be included in the process and alternatives.

This memorandum of record is believed to be an accurate record of the discussions at this meeting.

COMMENTS AND RESPONSES FOR PUBLIC INFORMATION CENTER No. 1

Comments Received through August 31, 2020:

Received: 2020-08-01 19:58:31

Subject: bike lanes on JFK

Message: Hello, I am writing in support of adding traffic calming and safe, separated bike lanes on JFK, the primary artery through Jersey City. It is hard to travel north to south in JC by bike, and it would be amazing if cyclists could traverse the whole city on JFK. It would help with commuting to JSQ and light rail stations and just improve quality of life all around. As it is now, JFK is like a highway that cuts through the city. Please make it safe for bike and pedestrian use.

Thanks!

Response: We appreciate your input and will consider your suggestions in the development of safe alternatives for bicycle and pedestrian use. Thank you for your time and comments.

Received: 2020-08-01 17:10:38

Subject: Pedestrian Crossing Time

Message: During the meeting, some commenters complained about there not being enough time to cross JFK and specifically mentions seniors and parents with strollers. The county engineer defended the crosswalk timing and mentioned using the MUTCD standard of 3.5 ft per second to set the timing. However, MUTCD provides guidance and does not set a single standard. As you can see here https://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/knowledge/faqs/faq_part4.htm#pcf4 and here <https://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/htm/2009/part4/part4e.htm> there is guidance for using slower rates and guidance for extending pedestrian crossing time, especially when wheelchair users and others with mobility issues frequently cross. Part of the project is adjacent to a major transit hub that is likely to see many users with mobility issues.

The engineer also mentioned the pedestrian islands. These islands are very small, and it feels extremely uncomfortable to wait in the middle of multiple lanes of traffic, especially when many drivers are exceeding the posted speed limit. Using the distance to these islands to set the pedestrian crossing time is unacceptable, because it forces pedestrians to wait through a second light cycle to finish crossing. We should be giving high priority to pedestrians being able to easily and comfortably fully cross the street and the guidance given by MUTCD supports extending the crossing time to do so. If the county is unwilling to extend the pedestrian phase to make this possible, they should eliminate traffic lanes to shorten the crossing distance.

Thank you for your time.

Response: We appreciate your input and will investigate the MUTCD standards more closely to determine crosswalk timing options for the improvements for pedestrians. We will also evaluate existing pedestrian islands for possible improvements. Thank you for your thorough feedback.

Received: 2020-07-27 10:43:44

Subject: JFK Blvd Safety

Message: JFK Blvd. is designed to be an automobile-oriented highway in the heart of a densely populated urban commercial and residential district. At its widest point in this corridor there are 7 traffic lanes. Is there a wider road or highway anywhere in Hudson County?

About half of the households in this part of Jersey City do not own automobiles. Walking, cycling, and transit are important transportation modes here. There was a comment made during the public information center meeting by a local businessperson, who said bikes should be on side streets, and that Jersey City shouldn't be a "cute village in Belgium." This sentiment is found too often among elected officials and even traffic engineers. People on bicycles on JFK are not joy-riding (believe me, there is NO joy in riding on JFK at all!! It's scary!!). Because of our high proportion of households without automobiles, people use bikes to get to work, to the JSQ transportation center, shopping, appointments, school, etc. And many of those things are on major thoroughfares like JFK Blvd. Many need to use bikes to perform their jobs. During the COVID-19 lockdown, how many people ordered meals to be delivered to their homes from the restaurants in India Square and Journal Square. Someone with a bike picked up that food and delivered it. And unfortunately they had to ride on a JFK blvd that was designed and built just for cars.

There are no bike lanes, no bus lanes, and the sidewalks along JFK are very narrow. Portions of the sidewalk in this study area are only 5 feet wide. There is hardly room for two people to pass, let alone when one or both have a cart or stroller.

The recently completed (2019) protected bicycle lane on Bergen Avenue currently terminates at Sip Avenue. On the corridor study that evaluated the portion of JFK south of Pavonia, several comments (perhaps many comments) were made about extending that protected bike lane northward, passing alongside the Journal Square Transportation Center. The protected bike lane should continue north through this study area. It would provide a much-needed safe bicycle corridor between Journal Square and the Heights. Continuing the two-way protected bike lane on the east side of JFK would impact only 7 on-street parking spaces on a 1/2 mile-long segment from Sip Ave at Bergen Ave to JFK Blvd at St Paul's. It seems almost too easy!

There is a small "slip lane" on northbound JFK approaching Newark Ave. Despite a stop bar on the pavement and TWO stop signs, many motorists think a green light for northbound JFK means they can roll through the crosswalk and make the right turn without stopping. I assume the slip lane is necessary for the NJT 80 bus to make the right turn, otherwise it should be removed.

Response: We appreciate your valuable input and our team will carefully consider your recommendations and comments regarding the importance of bike and pedestrian use as a primary mode of transportation in Jersey City. Thank you for your detailed comments and feedback on the study.

Received: 2020-07-16 21:39:25

Subject: JFK Blvd project

Message: Hi,

I'd like to encourage you to prioritize bicycle and pedestrian safety in the redesign of JFK Blvd. Nearly half of Jersey City residents do not own cars, and that percentage is even higher in transit-dense areas like Journal Square. We need to stop dedicating so much space and attention to moving cars as quickly as possible. We should replace most of the motor vehicle lanes with expanded sidewalks, protected bicycle lanes, and dedicated bus lanes. We must start planning for a greener future where people can safely move around their neighborhood without motor vehicles.

Thank you.

Response: We appreciate your input regarding the importance of bike and pedestrian safety in the design of alternatives. Thank you for your comments.

Received: 2020-07-15 19:50:47

Subject: JFK improvements for pedestrians and cyclists

Message: As part of the study being for improvements along JFK in Jersey City, safety for pedestrians and cyclists should be a priority. As a cyclist in Hudson County for many years, this area needs major improvements to provide safety for both motorists and cyclists. As the pandemic marches on, having safe open spaces for everyone has become more vital than ever. I look forward to seeing the analysis from the study. Thank you.

Response: We appreciate your input regarding the importance of bike and pedestrian safety in the design of alternatives. Thank you for your comments.

Received: 2020-07-15 18:55:22

Subject: Requesting Protected Bike Lanes to be built on JFK between St. Paul's and Pavonia

Message: I would like to make a comment requesting Protected Bike Lanes to be built on JFK between St. Paul's and Pavonia. We need to extend the bike lane from Bergen & Sip along JFK to St. Paul's. I live in the Heights and travel by bike with kids to the West Side near Lincoln Park daily for school commute and safety is our main concern/priority along this corridor.

Response: We appreciate your comment regarding the importance of protected bike lanes on JFK Boulevard between Pavonia Avenue and St. Paul's Avenue. Our team will carefully consider your recommendation as we develop alternatives. Thank you for your feedback.

Received: 2020-07-20 5:43:00 PM

Subject: JFK (Kennedy) Blvd. LCD Study Comments

Message: I wanted to submit my formal comments to the JFK Blvd. LCD study. Please see below:

1. I would strongly urge the County to install a two-way protected bike lane on the east side of Kennedy Blvd. within the study area. This bike lane would only lead to the removal of three parking spaces on Kennedy, while providing a major benefit to both pedestrians, who currently deal with cyclists on the sidewalks, and cyclists themselves. The bike lane would also have the effect of narrowing the travel lanes on Kennedy, which would help to reduce reckless driving and speeding, which came up many times as an issue during the public meeting.
2. The slip lane at the intersection of Kennedy and Newark Ave should be removed. Many cars do not yield to pedestrians and the only purpose this serves is to keep cars moving at a high rate of speed, which furthers the danger for pedestrians.
3. Pedestrian refuge islands should be installed at the intersection of Kennedy and Newark by removing the dedicated right-turn lanes on Kennedy.
4. The intersection of Pavonia Ave and Kennedy does not allow enough time for pedestrians to cross. Regardless of the formula used by the County (1 second/3.5 feet), vehicles traveling east/west on Pavonia often run the red light, which shortens the time that pedestrians have to cross Pavonia. Furthermore, pedestrians crossing east-west along the northern leg of the

intersection must travel nearly 118 feet, which would require 33 seconds of crossing time at a crosswalk that only provides 30 seconds. Pedestrians with strollers or mobility impairments do not have enough time to cross. While there is a pedestrian refuge island, that then leaves pedestrians to wait for three light cycles (left turn cycle on Kennedy, north-south cycle on Kennedy, east-west cycle on Pavonia) before they can finish crossing. They are standing in the middle of what is effectively an eight-lane roadway (three northbound lanes, one southbound left turn lane, four southbound lanes) with cars routinely exceeding the speed limit. It is unconscionable to me that the County could argue that this is really how an urban intersection should be designed. "

5. Pedestrians crossing north-south at the intersection of Pavonia and Kennedy should have a walk signal when north-south traffic on Kennedy has a green light. The only reason this is not the case is to accommodate vehicles turning right onto Pavonia Avenue.
6. In general, the streetscape for the study area is very unwelcoming. Trees should be planted at regular intervals and additional sidewalk lighting should be introduced through the use of decorative streetlights with secondary lighting to light the sidewalk (for reference, see the streetlights on Newark Avenue, both east and west of Kennedy).
7. Similarly, this entire section of roadway needs to be regraded. The trees mentioned in the previous point should include bioswales to mitigate the volume of stormwater runoff. It is a known issue that streets west of Kennedy experience flooding as a result of uncaptured runoff from Kennedy. St. Pauls Avenue is especially prone to flooding issues. As I mentioned during the PIC, there are community groups that would be more than happy to help maintain these bioswales.

As a car owner, cyclist, and pedestrian who uses this stretch of Kennedy on an almost daily basis, I understand the challenges but I would urge the County to stop settling for Kennedy serving as an urban highway and realize that 50% of the people who actually live here aren't using the road for driving."

Response: We appreciate your valuable input and our team will carefully consider your recommendations and comments regarding the importance of bike and pedestrian use as a primary mode of transportation in Jersey City. We will also investigate the MUTCD standards more closely to determine crosswalk timing options for the improvements for pedestrians, as well as your drainage/landscape concerns. Thank you for your detailed comments and feedback on the study.

Received: 2020-07-19 9:53:41 PM

Subject: Formal comments for JFK Blvd improvements

Message: Thank you again for moderating last week's discussion on the improvements to the Kennedy Blvd stretch between Pavonia and St. Pauls Ave.

Please see below my formal comments for submission:

1. It's essential that the county undertake new design that promotes safety for all users and residents of this area. This must mean adding a protected bike lane, which would offer so many benefits to residents of this area, a majority of whom don't own cars. I'm a car owner myself and would love to see this stretch be more accommodating of cyclists and pedestrians. Adding a protected bike lane would improve safety for pedestrians, who currently compete with cyclists over sidewalk space because the road itself is too unsafe for cyclists. The community recommendation for a protected bike lane at the eastern side of JFK would provide connectivity to an already existing bike lane on Bergen Ave. and by introducing a bike lane here, only a few parking spots would need to be eliminated — a move worth it for the overall benefit of this area.

2. Pedestrians must be better taken into account. This means more cross time and more crosswalks. For example, currently there is no crosswalk for pedestrians crossing at the north side of the intersection of JFK and St. Pauls Avenue.
3. The redesign must ensure it is forwarding-looking and bold in the way of mitigating the growing challenges related to climate change and promoting resilience. This can be done through the following:
 - Plant many trees along this stretch to absorb surface runoff to mitigate flooding which is common in this area.
 - Build and make the necessary investment in green infrastructure improvements like bioswales and landscaped bump outs, extensions, medians, and islands.
 - As a member of the Journal Square Community Association, I am sure community members would welcome maintenance and upkeep of this greenery in partnership with the city and county's support. We already have a Green Committee that would be well positioned to support upkeep.
4. The redesign must ensure proper placement of drains and catch basins. At the moment, the catch basin/drain at the southwestern corner of JFK and St. Pauls Ave does not catch the flow of rain water runoff, thereby leading to a heavier flow down St. Paul's Avenue causing flash flooding there. Many residents of rowhomes there have been grappling with flooding in their homes during storms in recent years. "

Response: We appreciate your valuable input and our team will carefully consider your recommendations and comments regarding the importance of bike and pedestrian use as a primary mode of transportation in Jersey City. We will also investigate the MUTCD standards more closely to determine crosswalk timing options for the improvements for pedestrians, as well as your drainage/landscape concerns. Thank you for your detailed comments and feedback on the study.

Received: 2020-06-04 6:56:00 PM

Subject: JFK PROTECTED BIKE LANE

Message: I am emailing to ask that you build a protected bike lane on JFK as part of the JFK blvd project rebuild.

It's imperative that we prioritize a safe protected route for people to bicycle & scoot. In these days of COVID, we must give people alternative ways to move around the city and this is a direct route Journal Sq PATH that is dangerous for all road users who aren't driving cars.

Thank you for your attention in this matter.

Response: We appreciate your input and will consider your suggestions in the development of safe alternatives for bicycle and pedestrian use. Thank you.

Received: 2020-06-03 5:09:00 PM

Subject: Bike lanes on JFK between St. Pauls and Pavonia

Message: I was just on a conference call about the JFK Blvd project that is addressing the area between St. Paul's and Pavonia Ave. I take my kids to school every day by bicycle (pre & post pandemic) on my way to work and I would like to request that this corridor include bike lanes. I travel with them from our home in the Heights to their school near Lincoln Park, and getting from the Heights through Journal Square on our way to the Bergen Ave protected bike lane is the biggest challenge for us from a safety perspective.

If there's anything you can do to make this area safer for people riding bikes, that would be greatly appreciated.

Response: We appreciate your input and will consider your suggestions in the development of safe alternatives for bicycle and pedestrian use. Thank you.

Received: 2020-06-03 9:54:00 PM

Subject: Bike Lanes for JFK Boulevard

Message: I was excited to hear that JFK may be getting a redesign. My wife and I are among the half of households in the Journal Square neighborhood who do not own a car. The current design of JFK not only doesn't help us, it actively limits our travel. We love the historic Lowe's Theater and the bar right next door. But it they're on the wrong side of JFK. JFK is intimidating to cross and unpleasant to walk beside. Riding my bike, which is my main form of transportation, on JFK feels like a suicide mission. And I am a very confident cyclist. Walking to the Lowe's feels just a bit too difficult and we sometimes don't make it for a movie even though we'd like to. The current road design sends the message that saving a few seconds for drivers is more important than safety and access for people without a car.

A redesign of JFK that prioritizes walking, public transportation, and biking would be a road that better serves the entire community.

Response: We appreciate your input and will consider your suggestions in the development of safe alternatives for bicycle and pedestrian use. Thank you.

Received: 2020-06-03 8:26:00 PM

Subject: Bike lane on JFK - your support needed

Message: Hope you are doing well. I understand JFK Blvd in the stretch of Journal Square is undergoing a study for potential changes. I am a resident and commuter from this area who uses this stretch daily. On my walks to the Path station, bicyclists and pedestrians compete for limited sidewalk space. It's time for this stretch of Kennedy to be shared more broadly with all — not just drivers. If there were protected bike lanes, I and members of my family would consider riding our bikes to work and to get around town which would help reduce traffic and emissions.

I hope you can do what is in your power to help shift the current model of Kennedy to one that also accommodates pedestrians and bicyclists and affords us ALL safer streets. It seems one impediment is a tiny tiny tiny stretch of parking. If these few spots can be removed this would be a game changer for the Journal Square community. Adding a protected bike lane here would also then allow a connection to the city's own existing bike lane on Sip Ave.

I am a car owner and a pedestrian — but having a bike lane here would convert me into a bike user for my daily commute. Right now it's too unsafe to ride a bike. I hope I can enlist your support for our community's collective needs over a handful of parking spots.

Response: We appreciate your input and will consider your suggestions in the development of safe alternatives for bicycle and pedestrian use. Thank you.