

EVENT SUMMARY

2020 Learning Series Session #2: How can we move Complete Streets forward in the region?
August 20, 2020, 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

ABOUT THE 2020 LEARNING SERIES

The 2020 Learning Series is part of One Region Forward’s ongoing efforts to provide technical assistance to municipalities and promote sustainable development in the Buffalo Niagara region. The Learning Series will explore topics in clean energy, water resilience, Complete Streets, land banking, and smart growth. These topics correspond with strategies and actions put forward in the One Region Forward Plan.

ABOUT THE EVENT

The Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council introduced “Complete Streets in the 21st Century,” which included a discussion of smart cities technology and considerations for COVID-19. Following this presentation, a panel of three speakers with local government experience shared best practices for project implementation and low-cost or no-cost Complete Streets solutions.

EVENT ATTENDEES

One hundred and three people attended the event. The majority (53%) of attendees were planners or engineers, including those working for county or state governments (30%), as consultants (17%), or for local governments (7%). Nonprofit or community-based organization representatives (17%), planning or zoning board members (7%), advocates (5%), and elected government officials (3%) were also in attendance. Sixty-four percent of attendees were from Erie County, 3% were from Niagara County, and 27% were from elsewhere in New York State.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Because of time constraints, not all questions asked during the question and answer session were able to be answered. The questions below were answered by the speakers after the event.

Q: How can transformational, longer-term Complete Streets projects be tied in with smaller-scale upgrades to infrastructure, such as updated pedestrian signals/crosswalks?

A: Recognizing that funding a Complete Street through a single project is often not possible, it can be helpful to tie incremental improvements like updated pedestrian signals and crosswalks enhancements to show implementation efforts towards a more Complete Street.

Seattle DOT uses a “Complete Streets Checklist” to ensure consistency with existing plans, identify and link smaller scale opportunities and other departments, agencies and/or partners to collaborate with to move things forward.

For more information on the checklist, please visit:

fdot.gov/docs/default-source/transit/documents/FDOTCO_ANationalSynthesisofTransitinCompleteStreets_FinalReport_20180508.pdf

smartgrowthamerica.org/app/legacy/documents/cs/impl/wa-seattle-checklist.pdf

Q: How can small nonprofits, activist organizations, residents, and others push for Complete Streets in the communities they represent?

A: Working together as a coalition with agreed upon priorities can be helpful. Some coalitions set an annual agenda of Complete Streets issues or projects they wish to focus on. Helping to educate the wider public on the benefits of Complete Streets individually or in partnership with the municipality can also be useful in building support for Complete Streets implementation.

EVENT SUMMARY

Q: How will this allow better access to local attractions and historical areas?

A: Complete Streets that incorporate multi-modal options that allow people to safely walk, bike, drive, and/or take public transportation help to increase access overall for all persons and businesses. For local attractions or historical areas, more choices for getting to and around an area helps to appeal to a wider audience of visitors and residents alike. Please see page 69 of the [2018 Benchmarking Report](#) from the League of American Bicyclists for some examples.

In addition to creating accessible choices for all users through Complete Streets to get to an attraction, it is important to make sure people are also aware of how to access all their options through signage, wayfinding, and marketing.

Q: How can Complete Streets reduce private vehicle use?

A: Complete Streets with pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and improved access to and efficiency of public transportation provide more choices for how people get around and in turn help reduce the burden of congestion on our roadways. This reduction can help improve travel times for all users, regardless of whether they walk, bike, drive, or take public transportation.

Q: Is it in the best interest to have both bike lanes on one side of the street, as opposed to what traditionally has been accepted?

A: The type of appropriate treatment really can depend on a variety of factors. For example, one side of the street may have more curb or driveway cuts, so it may be useful to have both lanes on the side with fewer cuts or conflict points. A two-lane protected bike lane is currently under construction on Niagara Street in the City of Buffalo and a temporary, two-lane protected demonstration project is being installed on Ridge Road in Lackawanna.

Protected bike lanes can speak to the concerns of about 60% of the general population who are “interested, but concerned” about riding in areas with traffic. Because these types of facilities go beyond paint, they are more expensive than traditional lanes but may be a good option for high use commuting or recreational corridors.

Q: Why not use reflectors to make lanes which give visual, tactile, and auditory information?

A: The use of raised markers has been limited to date around the country as they can present a hazard to bicyclists and are not always appropriate in areas with extreme winter conditions.

Q: Why haven't we looked at monorail to extend Rapid Transit?

A: An array of viable [alternatives](#) were evaluated by NFTA for the extension.

Q: Complete Streets or self-policing streets can ultimately lessen the need for traffic enforcement officers, help beautify under-resourced and blighted communities, and can benefit small businesses, especially on the Eastside. What are your thoughts on these points?

A: Street design that is inclusive of all modes of transportation, where appropriate, not only improves conditions for existing businesses, but also can be a method for revitalizing an area and attracting new development. Barracks Row in Washington, D.C. is one example. Barracks Row was experiencing a steady decline of commercial activity due to uninviting sidewalks, lack of streetlights, and speeding traffic. After many design improvements, which included new patterned sidewalks, more efficient public parking, and new traffic signals, Barracks Row attracted 44 new businesses and 200 new jobs. Economic activity on this three-quarter mile strip (measured by sales, employees, and number of pedestrians) has more than tripled since the inception of the project.

For more information, please visit: smartgrowthamerica.org/app/legacy/documents/cs/factsheets/cs-economic.pdf