



UpNext North Jersey Event Summary

Location: Paterson Museum and the Great Falls National Historic Park

Date: Saturday, January 25, 2020

Time: 10 am-12 pm



About UpNext North Jersey

UpNext North Jersey (UpNext) is a pilot emerging leaders group that engages young North Jersey residents in a dialogue with the NJTPA regarding important regional issues. The NJTPA seeks to better understand the values and needs of this particular demographic group related to regional transportation and land use issues. In exchange, the NJTPA provides UpNext members with unique opportunities to engage with regional thought leaders and decision-makers and also provide creative and fun ways for participants to “give back” to communities.

The Public Outreach and Engagement Team, part of the Voorhees Transportation Center at Rutgers University (Rutgers-POET) is working with the NJTPA to plan four events for UpNext members throughout FY 2019-2020. The first event, the program kickoff, occurred in September 2019 at the NJTPA offices in Newark. The event at the Paterson Museum is the second UpNext North Jersey event of the fiscal year. This report describes Rutgers-POET’s event planning and promotion work for the event and memorializes the activities and presentations that took place.

Overview of the Paterson Museum Event

The Paterson Museum is the City of Paterson’s local history museum containing exhibits on the city’s rich history of innovation and manufacturing. Housed in a restored 19th century locomotive erecting shop, the museum is a perfect example of North Jersey’s wealth of unique cultural attractions and provided an opportunity for UpNext members to learn about the region’s transportation history. The museum’s location also provided an opportunity for members to learn about the NJTPA’s current planning work in Passaic County. The museum is located about one

half mile from Great Falls National Park, a 77-foot waterfall located in the heart of downtown Paterson and at the center of a substantial neighborhood revitalization effort, providing the opportunity for members to learn about local redevelopment projects.

Promotion

Rutgers-POET promoted the event through social media and email invitations to UpNext members. Members received a save-the-date invitation, followed by several rounds of emails to request RSVPs and provide more information about the event agenda and day-of logistics. Rutgers-POET also promoted the event on the private UpNext Facebook group by creating an event page where Facebook users could RSVP.

Planning

Leading up to the event, Rutgers-POET worked with NJTPA staff to develop an event agenda and secure speakers. NJTPA staff invited Passaic County Freeholder John Bartlett, who serves as First Vice-Chair on the NJTPA Board of Trustees, to give welcoming remarks to the group. Rutgers POET reached out to several individuals who are knowledgeable about local redevelopment projects, invited them to speak at the event, and discussed presentation topics with them prior to the event. Rutgers-POET also coordinated with Paterson Museum staff to rent a meeting room in the museum and schedule a tour of the museum exhibits. Finally, Rutgers-POET coordinated with one of the presenters from Paterson to schedule a walking tour of the Great Falls National Historic Park led by an official National Park Service guide.

Agenda

10:00 to 10:10 am – Freeholder Bartlett remarks: Passaic County Freeholder John Bartlett kicked off the morning by welcoming members to Paterson and describing the importance of their participation in NJTPA transportation planning work. He reminded the group that decisions about transportation infrastructure investment take place decades prior to implementation, so getting involved at a young age is crucial.

10:10 to 10:40 am – Paterson Museum tour: Museum director Giacomo DiStefano gave UpNext members a tour of the museum's exhibits on the history of train, airplane, and submarine manufacturing in Paterson, tying in the reliance of early industry on the waterfall running through the city. Exhibits included scale and life-size models of the locomotives constructed in Paterson, original manufacturing facilities, an early submarine, and an original airplane engine.

10:40 to 11:00 am – Paterson redevelopment presentation: Paterson Board of Education member, charter school vice principal, and life-long city resident Manny Martinez introduced members to recent redevelopment projects in the city. Michael Cassidy, director of planning and real estate for the NJ Community Development Corporation, a non-profit social service and community development agency working in Paterson, shared examples of his agency's supportive and affordable housing projects.





11:00 to 11:40 am – Great Falls National Historic Park walking tour: UpNext members walked the short distance from the Paterson Museum to the Great Falls National Historic Park visitors center, where a National Park Service (NPS) guide facilitated a history lesson and walking tour. Inside the visitors' center, the NPS guide, a native Paterson resident, gave members an overview of the area's geological history and its place in Revolutionary war history using samples of local stones and minerals. The NPS guide then accompanied the group on a tour of the Great Falls, beginning with the series of canal-like "raceways" running through the neighborhood, which channeled flows of water to power nearby manufacturing plants. The tour concluded with a walk over a narrow bridge that provides a stunning view of the waterfall.



11:40 to 12:00 pm – Regional transit issues and solutions discussion: Following the Great Falls walking tour, UpNext members returned to the Paterson Museum where NJTPA staff facilitated a discussion about issues with the regional transit system and strategies to improve it. UpNext members shared a variety of observations and recommendations. A summary of their feedback is provided below.



Attendance

Of the approximately 30 people that attended the UpNext kickoff event in fall 2019, 14 members attended the event at the Paterson Museum.

Feedback

This section summarizes the feedback that NJTPA received from UpNext members about improving the region's transit system. Notably, many comments specifically addressed the bus system, ranging from better bus stop signage and shelters to redesigning the network of bus routes. Members would like to see more progress in modernizing the fare system and mobile transit apps.

UpNext members easily adopted a long-range planning approach, advocating for the NJTPA to begin planning for public transit infrastructure in future expanding population centers in northern New Jersey and Pennsylvania. They shared a preference for living in smaller, regional cities and towns centered around transit amenities. All of the comments received are grouped below by common themes.

Plan now to develop public transit infrastructure to connect future population centers.

- » We need to start planning for subway infrastructure in the northeast, especially around Newark and Paterson. There are old plans to extend MTA service into NJ from 100 years ago that have been abandoned. For example, extend the L train to Hoboken, or loop across Columbus circle to Jersey City, or extend the 7 or C train across the George Washington Bridge into Fort Lee.
- » Connect the NJTPA region to the Lehigh Valley region and areas further west to prepare for increased development in those areas.
- » There is still time to acquire right-of-way in northwestern NJ. Doing so now could positively shape development for hundreds of years.
- » Plan to eliminate vehicular traffic on current roadways and convert roadways to transit-only routes.
- » Start preparing now for future emerging markets and increased demand for public transit. Ask "What's the next Morristown?"

Expand and improve signage, especially at bus stops, to ease navigation and increase ridership.

- » Bus stops should display bus schedules.
- » Expanded and improved bus stop signage would increase trust in the bus system and boost ridership.
- » Secaucus station is very confusing. There is a lot of panic leaving the station and finding the right bus. The signs aren't very helpful.
- » Use more smart city technology. Build more screens in urban areas that provide transit and other public information, like the screens in Newark and NYC.

Redesign the current bus network to facilitate travel outside of NYC and increase access to service.

- » We need a ring-and-grid style bus network instead of a hub-and-spoke network.
- » Riders often need to travel into NYC to reach destinations in NJ when traveling by bus.
- » Re-evaluate the bus network. It is overly complicated and could be redesigned as part of the long range plan.
- » Coordinate private or municipal shuttle service with the major carriers to fill gaps in the bus network so that you never need to walk more than 2 or 3 blocks to get a bus.

Develop more small and mid-sized transit hubs.

- » I want to live in a small city or town that is walkable, such as Paterson, but that likely won't be where I work. Right now there are suburbs and cities, but nothing in between. There is no way to get to these smaller cities via public transit. All transit routes go to the city.

- » Develop small, regional transit hubs in locations like Northern Bergen County and Western Essex County rather than large transit hubs.
- » Plan for more development around transit. Make zoning more friendly for transit hubs. Create a transit village overlay for master plans.

Invest in better bus shelters.

- » Invest in bus shelters. There is nowhere to wait.
- » Bus shelters should protect riders from the heat and sun as heat waves get worse due to climate change. Street trees can also provide protection from the heat.
- » Extend curbs at bus stops so that you don't have to walk out into the middle of the street to get to the bus.

Improve the NJTRANSIT app for bus service.

- » Buses just don't appear on the apps sometimes.
- » The new NJ TRANSIT app update has improved the app. The Departurevision tool for trains is great. There should be something similar for the bus system.

Improve communication between transit agencies..

- » Communication and coordination about transit problems and delays is really difficult—even within NJ TRANSIT and among transportation agencies.
- » We need better coordination between local governments, NJTRANSIT, and NJTPA. Proactive relationships are crucial to infrastructure improvements, including bus shelters.

Increase bus reliability and schedule options.

- » I live in West New York and sometimes bus 108 to Newark has a lot of delays. It is not reliable and I miss interviews and appointments.
- » The earliest you can get into NYC is 6:30 am. Buses are packed around that time because of the amount of riders that board earlier.

Integrate the fare system across all transit modes and vary fares by peak and off-peak service.

- » The fare payment system should be integrated across all modes. Transfers are bulky and hard to navigate.
- » Change the fare system to charge different fares for peak and off-peak trips.
- » Implement "tap-and-go" payment systems.

Offer better express bus service.

- » We need a greater variety of express buses. I live in Englewood, and if I want to go to Hoboken there is only the 166 bus which either goes right to NYC or makes every stop and takes forever.
- » We need more express buses.

Plan for all types of public transit use, not just commuting.

- » Public transit is not just for commuting.
- » Connect NYC visitors to the Great Falls.

Other comments

- » Route 1 BRT through Middlesex County is top of mind. The area is sprawling and there are a lot of people.
- » Raise transit lines, roads, and sidewalks to protect from sea level rise and flooding.
- » Personal transportation modes like e-scooters and bikes need better protection from the elements because the draw of the private car is keeping dry and warm.
- » Implement smart cities technology to improve pedestrian safety.