



MEETING HIGHLIGHTS:

Safe System Approach Focus Area: Safe Road Users

Wednesday March 23, 2022

2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Presented Via Zoom; 65 attendees

All presentations and related meeting handouts are located on the RSTF Website:

www.dvrpc.org/Committees/RSTF

Welcome Remarks

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 PM by Marco Gorini, DVRPC, and Sharang Malaviya, PennDOT and RSTF co-chair.

Mr. Malaviya first reiterated the goal of the RSTF: to reduce roadway crashes and eliminate serious injuries and fatalities from crashes in the Delaware Valley. All participants and RSTF partners are encouraged to engage with RSTF materials via social media. Mr. Malaviya welcomed Sean Meehan, Senior Research Specialist at the Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center, as the New Jersey RSTF co-chair. Mr. Malaviya then introduced the action items tracking list, a spreadsheet where volunteers can update themselves or claim unclaimed action items that were proposed in previous meetings. Both Darrell Merritt and Mary Ann Sandone were spotlighted for their task completion on Lane Departure and Safe Vehicles. Before handing it over to Kevin Murphy to introduce the Safe Road Users topic, Mr. Malaviya clarified a note about the use of person-first and identity-first language as it relates to disability in this meeting. He also identified the goal of the meeting as exploring how existing safety countermeasures can be interpreted through a disability-informed lens.

Kevin Murphy, DVRPC, introduced the meeting's emphasis area, Safe Road Users, by presenting the five-year overview of regional killed and serious injury (KSI) crash trends, noting that the problem has worsened since 2016. Mr. Murphy highlighted the unusual regional crash trend that emerged in 2020, when a significant spike in fatalities occurred despite significantly fewer cars on the road. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recently released final crash numbers for 2020 which demonstrated that what the DVRPC region experienced was part of a national trend: despite an 11% decrease in vehicle miles traveled, fatal crashes increased by 6.8% resulting in a loss of 38,824 lives across the country. Early data from 2021 suggests that KSI trends have not improved.

Mr. Murphy showed a breakdown of KSI percentages from related emphasis areas (such as younger and older road users, impaired drivers, etc.) as a surrogate for the lack of disability specific data in both Pennsylvania and New Jersey crash datasets – a deficit which likely exists nationwide.

Mr. Murphy then explored two ways of interpreting the “Safe Road Users” focus area: first, that road users must use the system responsibly, and second, that the system must be designed so that all users can use the system safely. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 26% of American adults live with one or more functional disabilities: mobility, cognition, independent living, hearing, vision, and self care. Each disability impacts an individual’s ability to safely engage with the roadway system. One cross-cutting safety strategy that DVRPC is exploring is the use of Universal Design.

Mr. Murphy then introduced presenters/panelists Maddy Ruvolo, SFMTA, Kimberly Leung, SFMTA, and Alexa Vaughn, MIG, and Kaylen Phillips, DVRPC, as the moderator.

Presentation 1: Maddy Ruvolo and Kimberly Leung, SFMTA

Ms. Ruvolo opened the presentation with a quick history of the disability rights and access movement, highlighting the importance to acknowledge that the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) came from the hard work of disability activist groups. Our work as transportation professionals is a continuation of that work, and it is important to connect with local disability organizations who can provide valuable insight and expertise. Ms. Ruvolo touched briefly on the concept of Universal Design and the curb cut effect, which demonstrates how universal design helps everyone feel safer and encourages safer use. The design guide, *Getting to the Curb*, was a product of the organization Walking San Francisco with the intent to make roads safer for all.

Ms. Ruvolo then turned the presentation over to her colleague, Ms. Leung, to demonstrate how SFMTA has operationalized the *Getting to the Curb* design guide through the case study of Valencia Street. Ms. Leung used pictures to show how bike lane delineator placement took paratransit and parking/loading concerns into consideration. Ms. Leung used an example of a school loading island to demonstrate how accessibility can be incorporated into the visibility and physicality of pedestrian islands and its neighboring bike lane. A more in-depth explanation of the engineering design showed that such safety countermeasures can be quick and easy to install as well. The presentation concluded with the acknowledgement that these designs are under constant reevaluation and that access work continues to evolve to the needs and contexts of the community.

Presentation 2: Alexa Vaughn, MIG

Ms. Vaughn opened her presentation with a connection to Vision Zero - specifically how children, the elderly, and disabled people are more vulnerable to safety challenges when they use the transportation system. Ms. Vaughn then clarified the diversity of the deafness/hard-of-hearing spectrum and how that informs her work. Ms. Vaughn began her introduction to her principles of “DeafScape,” an adaptation of the architectural principles of DeafSpace. DeafSpace is a human-centered design that meets the needs of specific individuals. These principles often overlap with universal design principles, and many designers apply them unknowingly.

The first element of Ms. Vaughn’s DeafScape is textured transition, or the material contrast that provides tactical cues between sidewalk spaces, planting and buffer areas, and the street. The second element is the shoulder zone, a buffer area between the sidewalk and the street that enables pedestrians to step out of foot traffic and also provides space for lighting, trash receptacles, and bike parking without obstructing the pathway. The third element is the degree of enclosure. Because deaf people are reliant on visuals, a protective area that creates a secure, semi-private space to see and be seen can help relieve a person

from the bustle of city life. The fourth element is night lighting, which creates safer, more visible streets and illuminates the area for better sign language communication. The fifth element is flexible seating, which accommodates groups and individuals based on their needs. Deaf folks need clear sight lines for communication, especially in larger groups, so seating that can be rearranged is crucial. The sixth element is a wider pathway, with ten feet minimums to accommodate both conversation and circulation. Six to eight feet may work in less trafficked areas. Wider pathways also help with deliveries and those with mobility aids. The seventh element is rhythm, the visual patterns (such as with trees, lighting, and art) that create a sense of visual and spatial understanding. Rhythm helps with wayfinding and also creates a sense of identity. The final element is visual cues, which increase awareness and safety, especially at intersections. It is important to be considerate of how some visual cues may become confusing or overwhelming, and steps must be taken to clarify the understanding of critical spaces like crosswalk boundaries.

Ms. Vaughn concluded her presentation with a quick overview of what doesn't work in designing for disability. These elements include narrow sidewalks, pathway obstructions (like benches, trash, or delineators), and poor street tree selection and maintenance.

Panelist Discussion

The moderator, Kaylen Phillips, opened with a question about the responsibility of furthering access and what transportation professionals and planners can do in their own work. Ms. Leung started off the discussion by detailing SFMTA's internal process on addressing accessibility. Every project must be considered by the accessibility team and potentially the accessibility specialist within the Public Works department as well. Ms. Ruvolo emphasized that everyone is responsible for access and that every individual must think about how their work touches on access. She reiterated Ms. Leung's point that public agencies must build accessibility considerations into the process so it's part of every project every time. Ms. Vaughn agreed, stating that every person has the responsibility to not only educate themselves, but also ensure that a variety of stakeholders are included in the process.

The second question asked was regarding the strategies individuals and agencies can use - or shouldn't use - to best account for disability in the field. Ms. Ruvolo expanded on an earlier answer about the need for internal and external structures for feedback, including communication with disability organizations. Engagement should be integrated throughout the process and timeline so identified concerns can be addressed before it is too late or prohibitively expensive to do so. Ms. Vaughn stated that it is important not only to consult, but to also bring disabled people as experts onto the team. She shared a resource for this on her website, designwithdisabledpeoplenow.com. Additionally, Ms. Vaughn argued that disability simulations and sensitivity studies in which someone tries out a blindfold and cane for a day, for example, cannot replace disabled voices and perspective. From a manager's standpoint, Ms. Leung cemented the importance of incorporating accessibility into the budget for both outreach and construction.

An audience member asked the panelists what steps agencies are taking to use video remote interpretation (VRI) and how VRI can be implemented in public transit. Ms. Ruvolo was not aware of any agencies using VRI. Ms. Vaughn is more familiar with VRI being used in the context of a personal service used through someone's phone, but she would love to see it in the future as a step up from the live captioning BART is currently implementing.

Next the panelists were asked to speak to how accessibility improvements and universal design principles can help everyone use the transportation system safely. Ms. Vaughn opened by explaining that

the power of universal design is its adaptability and clarified that it isn't a one-size fits all solution or checklist where everyone can be happy. Even though universal design principles help everyone, designing with it in mind is to prioritize granting disabled people access to public space. Ms. Ruvolo used the example of wayfinding to show how universal design helps everyone. Ensuring that wayfinding makes sense for disabled communities means that nondisabled people will also benefit from knowing how to use transportation systems safely. Ms. Leung returned to the importance of outreach and education beyond implementation. In doing so, she finds that it helps communities understand the reason behind a new installation or project implementation. Checking in after the project is complete is important to get feedback to inform future work. Ms. Vaughn agreed, highlighting the ways that assumptions about the needs of disability communities can get in the way of the legibility and usability of wayfinding.

The panel discussion concluded with the panelists' final takeaways and suggested next steps for attendees wishing to better incorporate disability into their transportation and safety work. Ms. Ruvolo suggested RSTF members create structures to ensure accessibility is part of projects moving forward, especially when it comes to funding and budgeting. She also suggested members adopt the perspective that access is a collective responsibility that truly does make roads safer for all and may be considered a direct safety intervention. Though San Francisco has been making strides in better including disability considerations in projects, Ms. Leung admitted there is still a need to have better documentation for the expectations and design approaches on doing so. Ms. Vaughn acknowledged that access can feel very daunting, so she encouraged RSTF members to reach out to consultants and folks who do have the knowledge. There may be a certain number of people who need to access a building or park on any given day, but there are so many more who use public rights of way to get from destination to destination. Therefore transportation planners have a responsibility to be an ally and advocate for disability communities.

Special Strategies Breakout Rooms

Each of the four breakout groups discussed potential "action items," with a focus on the Safe Systems Approach, that each person could take on to support the RSTF goal of eliminating KSI in the region. These action items were recorded and are being tracked by DVRPC, which will check in on progress before future meetings. Discussion lasted approximately 30 minutes and each began by discussing reactions to the presentations, following with discussion on potential action items.

In reaction to the presentations, breakout groups reiterated the importance of the following points:

- Access improvements are similar to Complete Streets efforts and should have a similar approach in incorporating access and safety into all projects.
- There is still so much focus on complying with ADA minimum standards that there isn't any focus on what is actually best practice or what is possible. These presentations were an inspiring reminder to push beyond the minimum.
- It is important to make sure that "stakeholder meetings" accurately represent the public, including the disability community. Instead of simulating disability, agencies should actively recruit members of the disability community in public outreach efforts.
- Attendees were glad for the discussion around funding and budgeting.
- The Valencia Street project is impressive in how responsive it is to many road users.
- The challenge with translating the lessons learned from the west-coast to the east-coast is the difference in existing conditions in terms of road age, widths, and other roadway constraints. However, someone made a counterpoint that Europe has been improving their accessibility with similar or greater constraints.

Some of the proposed action items included:

- Re-evaluate the Road Safety Audit (RSA) process to ensure the disability community is represented and that disability/access issues are considered.
- Include an audit of curb cuts and their date of repair in the regional sidewalk inventory. Seek out funding resources to make this data set complete.
- Include disability into conversations about funding and budgeting at local, state, and federal levels.
- Conduct outreach to disability communities for boards, committees, task forces, and throughout the design process. Promote transparency on the extent to which the disability community is represented by various boards or design agencies.
- Create a cheat-sheet for PA and NJ outreach for Centers for Independent Living and other connections with the disability community.
- Create an internal documentation process for how accessibility is/should be included in project outreach and implementation.
- Share internal DVRPC resources (RSA checklist, aging checklists, dementia-friendly checklists, etc.) to boost their visibility and awareness.
- Determine where data is being collected about road users with disabilities.
- Promote more education on the topic of disability, access, and inclusion.

After the sessions were finished, RSTF members left the breakout groups and returned to the main session.

Closing Remarks

After each group shared an overview of their action item discussion, new co-chair Sean Meehan concluded the program with gratitude to the attendees for participating in the program and hopes to see RSTF members at both the New Jersey TransAction conference April 26-28 and the Vision Zero conference April 30. DVRPC will follow up on action items identified during the breakout sessions.

Mr. Meehan also gave a legislative update on New Jersey's Safe Passing Law, which took effect in March of 2022. This law requires drivers to give four feet of space when passing bicyclists. The RSTF will partner with other agencies to spread the word. There were also a few updates in regards to the IIJA, including an email list compiling IIJA opportunities and funding, such as the Safe Streets and Roads for All program. RSTF members were also encouraged to browse the new National Roadway Safety Strategy.

The next RSTF meeting is scheduled for June 2022, topic to be determined.

Meeting Attendee List

Aaron Frait, DVRPC
Alexa Vaughn, MIG
Andrew Fidler, Upper Merion Township Police
Andrew Thompson, Urban Engineers
Anne Messner, Centre County
Benjamin Baron, Philadelphia Streets
Department
Benjamin Gruswitz, DVRPC
Bill Houpt, FHWA
Cathy Spahr, Delaware County
Cheryl Kastrenakes, Greater Mercer TMA
Christine Norris, Center for Injury Research
Dana Dobson, City of Philadelphia
Darrell Merritt, PennDOT
David Kanthor, PCPC
Elizabeth Mastaglio, DVRPC
Emily Gates, TransOptions
Eric Quinn, Chester County
Eva Hayes, COP
Frances Conwell, Sisters Interacting Through
Stitches
George Thiel, SICK Inc.
Gregory Krykewycz, DVRPC
Ian Schwarzenberg, DVRPC
Jacob Thompson, Greater Mercer TMA
Joe Rapp, NJDOT
Justin Neff, DVRPC
Karen Alexander, NJTIP, Rutgers
Karin Morris, DVRPC
Katie Kuffner, Chester County
Kayla Bancone, DVRPC
Kaylen Phillips, DVRPC
Keith Hamas, NJ TPA
Keith Skilton, FHWA
Kelvin MacKavanagh, DVRPC
Kevin Murphy, DVRPC
Kimberly Leung, SFMTA
Kristen Scudder, DVRPC
Laureen Sendel-Grant, Montgomery County
Lily Reynolds, City of Philadelphia
Lisa Serieyssel, Greater Mercer TMA
Lois Goldman, NJ TPA
Maddy Ruvolo, SFMTA
Marco Gorini, DVRPC
Maridarlyn Gonzalez, DVRPC
Mark Morley, DVRPC

MaryAnn Sandone, DCTMA
Matthew Popek, Montgomery County
Michael Mastaglio, Urban Engineers
Mohammad Islam, NJ DOT
Morgan Hugo, Liberty Resources
Parisa Hosseini, Rowan University
Patricia Ott, MBO Engineering
Patrick Farley, Cross County Connection TMA
Ronique Bishop, FHWA
Ryan Gallagher, DVRPC
Sarah Moran, DVRPC
Sean Connelly, Noroc
Sean Meehan, Rutgers University
Seri Park, Villanova University
Sharang Malaviya, PennDOT
Simon Bernnard, Montgomery County
Susan Quick, Brain Injury Alliance of NJ
Tom Stanuikynas, Burlington County Bridge
Commission
Warren Strumpfer, Camden County HTSTF
Wayne Shelton, SJTPO
William Beans, MBO Engineering