



MEMORANDUM

From the desk of Janice Talley · Director, Planning and Community Development · tel: 973-509-4954 · email: jtalley@montclairnjusa.org

TO: Planning Board
FROM: Janice Talley, P.P., AICP
RE: Master Plan Reexamination Report – Transportation + Mobility Subcommittee Report
DATE: June 14, 2023

The Transportation + Mobility Subcommittee met on May 18 and included Tony Ianuale, Keith Brodock, Jacob Nieman and John Wynn.

Issues

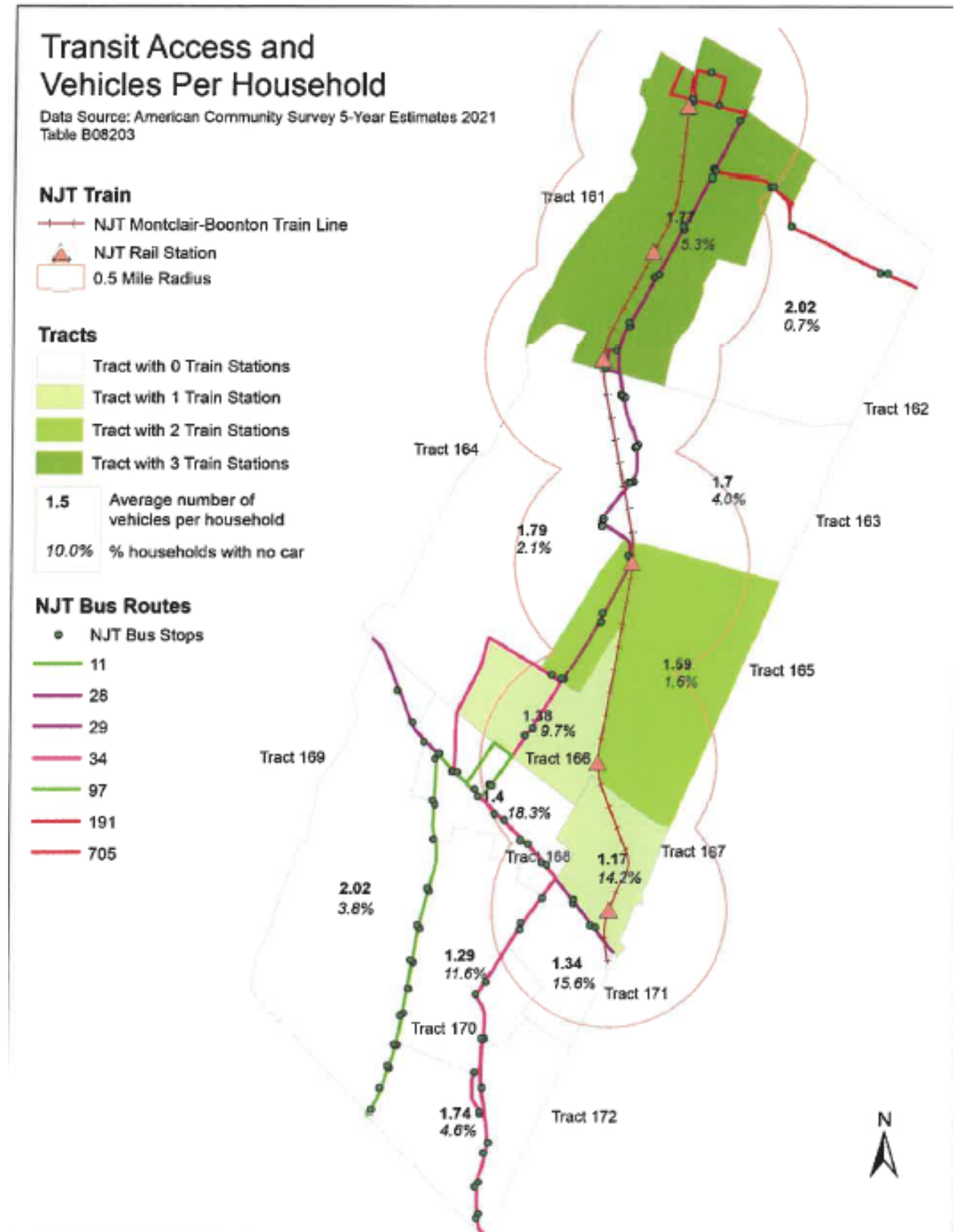
The issues identified in Transportation + Mobility section of the Unified Plan include:

1. It is difficult to live in town without at least one private car. **Response:** *This depends on where people live and household size. In Montclair Township, almost 8 percent of households do not own a private vehicle as shown in Table 1. With six train stations and multiple bus routes, households without private vehicles are generally located in areas that are well-served by public transportation.*

**Table 1: Number of Households Without a Private Vehicle
Montclair Township, New Jersey**

Census Tract	Number	Percent
161	59	5.3%
162	8	0.7%
163	50	4.0%
164	27	2.1%
165	21	1.6%
166	108	9.7%
167	188	14.2%
168	331	18.3%
169	39	3.8%
170	148	11.6%
171	123	15.6%
172	48	4.6%
Total	1,150	7.9%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate
Data Profile, 2021. Table B08203.



2. Montclair lacks local transit that is safe, consistent, predictable, and convenient. **Response:** *Montclair is a suburban town that is well served by public transportation providing access to regional destinations. The Township's six train stations and multiple bus routes provide access to public transportation for much of the community. Public transportation use changed after the COVID-19 pandemic, with both train and bus ridership in Montclair decreasing dramatically between 2019 and 2023, as indicated in Tables 3 and 4. Train ridership levels decreased by over 40% at the Mountainside, Walnut Street and Watchung train stations. likewise, bus ridership decreased between 40% and 50%. The Decamp bus company, which operated for 153 years and provided daily service to New York City, closed in April 2023 because ridership was only 20% of pre-pandemic levels.¹ Boxcar, a new private regional bus company, has stepped in to provide private local bus service to New York City with four pick-up locations in Montclair using an app-based program. While public transportation to locals outside of the Township is good, the Township lacks good intra local transit options and weekend transit service.*

**Table 3: Average Rail Weekday Boardings by Station
 Montclair Township, Essex County, New Jersey**

Station	FY 19	FY 23 (Q2)	Change
Bay Street train station	1453	944	-35%
Walnut Street train station	1180	620	-47%
Watchung train station	820	484	-441%
Upper Montclair train Station	582	388	-33%
Mountainside train station	146	71	-52%
Montclair Heights train station	326	320	-2%

Note: Q2 FV23 from October 2022 – December 2022
 Source: NJ Transit

**Table 4: Ridership by Bus Stop
 Montclair Township, Essex County, New Jersey**

Bus Stop	Sept. 2019		Jan. 2023		% Change	
	On	Off	On	Off	On	Off
18121 – Bloomfield Ave at South Park St (11, 29 & 34 lines)	208	37	110	18	-47%	-51%
18138 – Park St at Bloomfield Ave (28, 34 & 97 lines)	99	219	66	165	-33%	-25%
18132 - Bloomfield Ave at Maple Pl (11 & 29 lines)	40	102	24	61	-40%	-40%
18139 – Bellevue Plz at Bellevue Ave (28 line in)	65	2	54	3	-17%	50%
18140 – Bellevue Plz at Bellevue Ave (28 line out)	8	61	7	55	-13%	-10%

In recent years, local transit options have been enhanced through increased microtransit and vehicle sharing programs. Microtransit is a form of on-demand transportation that provides highly flexible routing and/or highly flexible scheduling of minibus vehicles shared with other passengers. Montclair Township has partnered with Essex County to contract with EZ Ride to provide on-demand shuttle services for older adults and people with disabilities. Easy access to ridesharing services, such as Uber and Lyft, provides a convenient alternative to private automobiles for local and regional mobility.

¹ Montclair Local. "Montclair's DeCamp Bus Lines ending commuter services to New York." March 20, 2023.

3. Most of the NJ Transit bus stops are not sanctioned but are "courtesy stops" that are unmarked and difficult to recognize. Not enough local buses, and few residents have knowledge of existing routes. **Response:** *This is still a valid issue and improved signage for bus stops is needed. In addition, NJ Transit has created an app that makes it easier to find bus service.*
4. Some residents feel that there is inadequate weekend NJ Transit service, as trains do not run north of Bay Street Station on the weekends. **Response:** *This is a valid issue as weekend train service is only provided at the Bay Street train station. Weekend bus service, however, is still available.*
5. Montclair train stations and bus stops do not provide adequate facilities, such as racks or storage, for cyclists. **Response:** *This is a valid issue as the only train station that has bicycle storage is the Bay Street train station. Bus stops at key intersections should include a bus shelter, bench seating, signage, and a design that is integrated with the streetscape.*
6. Street design, configuration, and sidewalk maintenance gives precedence to the needs of private cars and does not adequately serve the needs of pedestrians and cyclists. **Response:** *This is a valid issue and should be incorporated with issues 7 and 8.*
7. Montclair has a lack of safe and easy non-automobile connections to amenities (schools, open spaces, train stations, town centers, etc.) **Response:** *This is a valid issue. The Township should encourage micromobility, which includes a range of lightweight vehicles such as bicycles, e-scooters, and mopeds, by providing more protected bike lanes. Micromobility vehicles, particularly electric micromobility vehicles, have increased in popularity due to their convenience, affordability and eco- friendliness compared to traditional modes of transportation. Micromobility is anticipated to grow as commuting patterns change and local governments invest in safe travel lanes for micromobility vehicles. One such investment is the Essex Hudson Greenway, an approximately nine-mile, 100-foot wide linear corridor spanning Essex and Hudson counties through eight municipalities. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) acquired the property from Norfolk Southern on August 19, 2022. The NJDEP's vision is to convert the corridor into a thriving recreation and transportation corridor that ultimately connects Montclair Township to Jersey City. The Greenway will create a linear multi-modal recreational and transit corridor enabling seamless walking, biking and transit opportunities while serving as a catalyst for environmental improvements including updated stormwater infrastructure.*
8. Biking and walking, for recreation and as a form of transportation, is not safe enough. **Response:** *This is a valid issue. In 2022, there were 47 vehicle crashes involving pedestrians and 14 vehicle crashes involving bicycles.²*

Recommendations

The recommendations in the Transportation + Mobility section of the Unified Plan include the following:

1. Establish a network for pedestrians and cyclists. **Response:** *This is still a valid recommendation and is increasingly important with the advent of the Essex Hudson Greenway.*
2. Upgrade transit service. **Response:** *This is beyond the capacity of the Township. Should be reworded to state that the Township should encourage State efforts to upgrade transit services.*
3. Improve circulation for private cars. **Response:** *The impacts from increasing deliveries and short- term parking for carshare services on local streets are leading to poor air quality, considerably more traffic congestion, and extra stress on local infrastructure. Trucks and cars frequently double park on local streets to make deliveries, creating congestion on local streets. Township streets should be redesigned to provide more loading areas and more short-term parking to create safer circulation for all vehicles. Parking fees should be reconfigured to discourage vehicles from parking on the street and encourage vehicles to park in the Township's parking decks. Additional enforcement of traffic and parking laws is needed.*
4. Increase shuttle service. **Response:** *There is a need for better intramunicipal transit service.*

The Township should evaluate the need to resume jitney service to bring local commuters to train stations. Additional consideration should be given to replace traditional shuttle services with microtransit.

5. Create enhanced bus stops. **Response:** *Enhanced bus stops that include shelter, seating and signage should be provided at key intersections.*
6. Provide illuminated crosswalk signs at unsignalized intersections. **Response:** *This is a valid recommendation that has been successfully implemented at key intersections within the Township. It should be continued as necessary. This recommendation should start with improve pedestrian safety by providing illuminated cross walk signs and should be expanded to include providing additional 4-way stops, bump outs and curb extensions and narrowing streets.*
7. Implement a complete streets network. **Response:** *Should be amended to include "in accordance with the Montclair SAFE Complete Streets Implementation Plan.*
8. Create a Street Design Guide. **Response:** *This is no longer valid. The Montclair SAFE Complete Streets Implementation Plan was prepared in 2017. The Plan provides an assessment of the Township's street network and a framework for implementing complete streets policies on the various road typologies in the Township. The Plan was incorporated into the Unified Land Use and Circulation Plan by reference in 2020.*
9. Create a Bicycle Master Plan. **Response:** *Should be incorporated into recommendation number 1.*
10. Expand the number of designated Transit Villages in the Township. **Response:** *In order to be designated a Transit Village, the zoning for the around the transit station must be changed to allow for additional density. This is no longer valid as significant additional development around the five train stations north of the Bay Street train station is not proposed.*
11. Establish a Township-wide street classification system. **Response:** *No longer valid as the Township is not proceeding with a form-based code.*