

SMTC's Forum on Active Transportation | March 2, 2021

Questions and comments received with registration, via email, and in meeting chat and post-meeting evaluation form results

Note: Participant comments/questions are organized by topic and are in *italics*, SMTC staff responses follow.

Bike share

- *When we consider Bike Shares, consider the inclusion of communities of color more.*
 - *Agree, including entire areas of the city.*
 - *As a former Gotcha (former bike share here) employee, I had many ideas to have events to bring attention to it to other parts of the city as some portions were not being reached, but residents were interested.*
- *Was the bike share sustainable?*
 - *The bike share could be with regular ridership*

SMTC staff response: The City of Syracuse's bike share program was launched in July 2019 and operated at no cost to the City, funded by the operator through sponsorship and fees. Prior to the COVID-10 pandemic, the bike share was operating with 35 hubs and 100 bicycles in circulation, averaging just over 100 rentals per day, with plans to add more bikes. The operator, Gotcha LLC, was acquired by another entity in late 2020, at which time the service was suspended.

Numerous items failed to develop under the previous operator, such as partnerships with City community centers and local credit unions, outreach programs in additional neighborhoods, additional bikes and stations, and other items. These or similar items will be pursued as part of the solicitation process for a new operator.

Notice was published in the NYS Contract Reporter in February 2021 that the City is seeking to designate a preferred vendor to operate a Syracuse Shared Micromobility System, to include bike-share and possibly other modes such as scooters, and the City is hoping to have a new shared micromobility system operating this spring.

Bicyclist outreach/education

- *As the weather continues to break, will there be info put out about sharing the road with cyclists?*

SMTC staff response: As part of the [SMTC's Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Outreach Initiative](#) (completed in 2017), we collaborated with the American League of Bicyclists and AAA to co-brand a series of five smart-cycling videos. These were aired during two 5-week campaigns in summer and fall 2017. One of these videos is also aired statewide through a partnership between the MPO Association and the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee. SMTC re-posts these [videos](#) to our Facebook page each May (typically one video a week) during National Bike Month.

- *Ride of Silence is May 19, 2021 @ 7pm. I am the NYS Coordinator for Ride of Silence. There will be an event....even in a smaller scale as well as virtual as it was last year.*

SMTC staff response: Please be sure to share the event details with us, and we will share through our social media.

- *Exciting to see the city considering 'pop-up' methods for crowdsourcing new ideas from the community. This can lead to putting bike lanes & crosswalks in high-demand places, for example.*

SMTC staff response: Comment noted.

Empire State Trail, Loop the Lake, other specific trails

- *Closure of West Shore Trail (Lakeview Amphitheater) many weekends during summer -- any alternate routes considered?*

SMTC staff response: We are not aware of any other options that were considered.

- *Who is responsible for Snow and ice removal for the Empire State Trail from the Orange line to Hiawatha Boulevard?*
 - *DeWitt has been clearing our walking paths by our highway dept.*
 - *Could not all jurisdictions coordinate/merge resources for a shared contract?*

SMTC staff response: When projects such as this are built by NYSDOT, typically NYSDOT will transfer maintenance responsibility to the municipality in which the trail/project is built. There are maintenance agreements which have been put in place for the Empire State Trail. These agreements include the maintenance of the trail, such as potholes, but does not include plowing the trail in the winter. The municipalities are not required to maintain the trail in the winter; it is up to each municipality to decide if they want to clear snow and ice. Each entity already has staff that regularly perform maintenance on other facilities (roads, sidewalks, trails, etc.), so there is not a separate contract just to maintain the EST trail segments. The segment of the Empire State Trail from the Orange Lot to Hiawatha Boulevard was built by both Onondaga County and Honeywell.

- *Any update on 'Murphy's island' near Destiny?*

SMTC staff response: Christopher Rauber, engineer with Onondaga County Department of Transportation (OCDOT), addressed Murphy's Island during his update in the meeting. He mentioned that Murphy's Island will include an Onondaga Lake Trail section, locally funded, to be built across most of the island (however, not all the way across). The County anticipates building the Murphy's Island segment this year if they are able to move through some of the environmental hurdles associated with the island. Looking into the future, the County will have another federally funded project coming down the line that will take the trail from Murphy's Island to Liverpool.

- *Will section of west trail from boat launch along shore to new ramp be paved?*

SMTC staff response: The newest segment of the Loop the Lake trail from the Honeywell Visitor's Center (boat launch) to the new pedestrian bridge over the railroad is paved.

- *How many people using this path a year?*
- *I was wondering if you or the State has done a study of usage of the RRFB's at the new crossings. Speaking from experience, I used the western part of the trail a lot over the summer and fall and casually observed the RRFB that was installed on Warners Road and it seems like it was used very little. Really the only time it seemed like it was being used was if there was a lot of traffic and pedestrians could not cross and almost used it as stop light in order to cross.*

SMTC staff response: SMTC or member agencies have not collected any usage data for the Empire State Trail. The rectangular rapid flashing beacon (RRFB) is intended to be activated as needed to draw driver attention to the uncontrolled crosswalk, so that the drivers will yield to pedestrians. Drivers are already supposed to yield to pedestrians in crosswalks, this just announces the presence of pedestrians at a possibly unexpected crossing.

- *I would like for SMTC to link with me and of course this info could be highlighted more as well as placing a ghost bike along the trail.*

SMTC staff response: We would also like to connect with additional cycling groups in the region. We are not aware of examples of a ghost bike* being placed on a trail. This would likely need to be discussed with the entity that has maintenance responsibility for that section of trail.

*“A ghost bike (also referred to as a ghostcycle or WhiteCycle) is a bicycle roadside memorial, placed where a cyclist has been killed or severely injured, usually by the driver of a motor vehicle. Apart from being a memorial, it is usually intended as a reminder to passing motorists to share the road. Ghost bikes are usually junk bicycles painted white, sometimes with a placard attached, and locked to a suitable object close to the scene of the accident. They are also sometimes stripped of their tires, to deter theft.” (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghost_bike)

- *What is the status/plans for the trail from the city south along Onondaga Creek to Nedrow?*

SMTC staff response: Phase III of the City of Syracuse’s Creekwalk project would connect Kirk Park to Dorwin Avenue. The City of Syracuse plans to complete this phase in the future but does not currently have project funding or a time frame identified to do so. The Creekwalk currently ends in Kirk Park; however, there is a bikeway along Onondaga Creek Boulevard (closed to vehicular traffic) that runs south to West Newell Street.

- *Will there be detailed maps, including parking areas for the Empire State Trail, Round the Lake Trail, etc?*

SMTC staff response: Maps for the Empire State Trail are available online at <https://empiretrail.ny.gov/map>. The Onondaga Lake Park Map is available online at <https://www.onondagacountyparks.com/assets/Uploads/OLP-MAP2021.pdf>

- *The paths and trails are amazing as I already have friends that want to meet up and ride the trails from their cities! :-)*
- *Runners and Walkers also use the path as Fleet Feet has runs and their run groups in that area. It is nice that it is being used in a variety of ways.*
- *I would like to say thank you for the vision and execution of the Empire Trail over the CSX Mainline at Onondaga Lake, through the Wastebeds in Camillus and down the median of Erie Boulevard in Syracuse and DeWitt.*

Our community is instantly more attractive, competitive, enjoyable, safer and healthier.

Also, the infrastructure leading to the creation of the Empire Trail can not be overlooked. Among the infrastructure is: the Onondaga Lake East Shore Recreational Trail, Onondaga Lake West Shore Recreational Trail, the Syracuse Creekwalk Phases I and II, and the Erie Canalway Trails in Camillus and DeWitt.

My COVID silver lining — if there is such a thing — has been rediscovering my love of biking in nature and exploring the community. I have experienced more of the City of Syracuse and Onondaga County over the last ten months than I had in the 25 previous years.

I know supporting recreational trails and bike lanes can be met with opposition by some in our fossil fuel driven auto-centric world.

This one biker would like to congratulate you for an insightful and courageous vision well executed.

Our recreational trails are now the envy of communities across the State and beyond.

SMTC staff response: Comments are noted. We appreciate the positive feedback, and will be sure to share with our member agencies!

Pedestrian signals

- *Pedestrian actuation is a particular issue at signalized intersections. Lots of ITS solutions, which are best?*
- *Does the walk signal 'see' you, or is this just automated?*

SMTC staff response: Traffic signals can be programmed so that a walk phase appears every cycle, or so that the walk phase appears only when actuated by a pedestrian pushing the button. In response to COVID-19, the City of Syracuse put many city-owned signals with pedestrian push buttons on “automatic recall” so that the pedestrian phases always appear without people having to touch the buttons. As new technology develops it may be prove useful for new and upgraded signals.

- *Really appreciate the automatic pedestrian signals, though the one at East Adams and South State doesn't appear to be working. Noticed the new four-way stop sign at Almond and East Genesee yesterday; what brought that about?*

SMTC staff response: The signal infrastructure along Adams Street is owned by the NYSDOT. At this point, “automatic recall” (see above question) has only been implemented at City-owned signals. The signal pole at East Genesee and Almond failed. Temporary stop signs were utilized prior to the temporary signal being installed.

Connections with other projects and with transit

- *How can we connect walking/biking to BRT, amenities, neighborhoods, etc.*
- *Access to jobs outside the city for city residents*
- *Is the county looking at the walkability for ease of getting to work/bus/amenities and not just recreation?*

SMTC staff response: SMTC looks at transportation holistically. Our recent “enhanced transit” study ([Syracuse Metropolitan Area Regional Transit Study, Phase 1](#), or “SMART 1”), recommended a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system. The SMART study included “station area plans” that looked at redevelopment opportunities around the proposed BRT stations, which could bring more amenities to neighborhoods along the proposed routes. We have a number of studies on our work program right now that are looking at pedestrian mobility in our region, including:

- Village of Skaneateles Pedestrian Safety & Access Study
- Manlius Village Center Pedestrian Safety & Mobility Study
- Tuscarora Road Corridor Study
- CNY Recreational Heritage Trail Bike Corridor
- Syracuse Sidewalk Planning Study
- Syracuse Safe Routes to School Manual

These studies are all described in our [current UPWP](#).

In 2017, the SMTC concluded the [Work Link study](#), which examined access to jobs. We are also planning to start another recurring forum – similar to this Forum on Active Transportation – that will focus on job access.

Traffic impacts and roads

- *The second largest Amazon Warehouse in the World is now sited in the Town of Clay. No input on the impact of its traffic was solicited or required from adjacent municipalities. Other than stating that access to Thruway Exits 38 & 37, no traffic plan was released. A Village of Liverpool 3-way intersection is being widened to accommodate trucks. Question: Was SMTC and the Thruway Authority part of or privy to an actual traffic plan for this project.? If not, why & if so will it be made public?*

SMTC staff response: A Special Joint Meeting of the Town Board and Planning Board of the Town of Clay was held on September 30, 2019 to consider a zone change request for the properties on Morgan Road for the proposed distribution facility. This meeting was open to the public and is documented on the [Town of Clay's website](#). A “responsiveness summary to the public comments that were made at the September 30, 2019 public hearing” was issued in October 2019 by the developer’s attorney. We suggest contacting the Town of Clay directly to obtain these documents along with the traffic study and independent review of the traffic study, which were referenced at the public hearing and in the response summary. As noted in articles originally posted in [September 2019](#) and [May 2020](#), the traffic study indicates 1,289 vehicles entering or exiting the facility during the morning peak and 1,268 vehicles entering/exiting during the afternoon peak, with 20 or fewer trucks entering/exiting during either of the rush hours.

OCIDA, acting as lead agency for the coordinated environmental review of the proposed warehouse distribution facility, issued a negative declaration under SEQRA on October 31, 2019 stating that the project “will not result in significant adverse environmental impact.” The SMTC was not directly involved in the SEQRA determination.

As noted above, we are aware that a traffic impact study was prepared. SMTC staff have met with Village of Liverpool officials at their request to discuss various projects in and around the village, including the proposed warehouse facility as well as NYSDOT’s examination of the Onondaga Lake Parkway, and to provide context for these various studies.

- *Will E. Genesee St. be repaved? It is awful*

SMTC staff response: The City is evaluating pavement conditions in preparation for the upcoming construction season. No specifics are available at this time.

- *Striping the side of arterial streets and particularly unimproved streets is relatively inexpensive and provides a multitude of safety advantages. 1) The striping at the side of the street allow cars to easily see the side of the road on dark, rainy nights. 2) It provides a safe space for walkers when there are no sidewalks or when sidewalks are not passable because of snow, 3) It provides a safe zone for bicycles and joggers. Why isn't such a solution instituted whereas varies ideas and projects like parking in the middle of the street, roundabouts at Comstock and E. Colvin St. and the old "Topics" projects either were not instituted or failed in short order.*

SMTC staff response: SMTC considers many options, with community input, in our planning studies. Shoulder striping may be an option for some streets in our planning area.

Inclusivity in public outreach

- *What is being done to appeal and get more involvement within communities of color?*
- *What are the benefits to communities of color when it seems they are not invited to the table for these forums?*

SMTC staff response: This was the first in what we intend to be a series (quarterly) of Forums on Active Transportation, and also our first attempt at a significant virtual public meeting. The meeting was publicized through our existing email list (540 recipients) and our Facebook page. Moving forward, we will look for additional methods of outreach. We also encourage everyone that participated in this first meeting to pass along the information to your own contacts in the community. People can sign-up for our email list using the [form on our website](#), and receive direct notification for any future meetings (as well as our newsletters). We are also aiming to establish additional forums on other topics, including job access and a more general transportation/traffic forum. We always look to partner with community organizations or individuals that can leverage additional outreach networks. Generally, when we hold project-specific public meetings, we hold these within the impacted community, such as in a local school or library, and we anticipate returning to that approach once COVID-19 protocols will allow in-person events to happen safely.

Other

- *clean air supply*
- *the buses*
- *Pedestrian with cane; hard to climb steps w/o railing*
- *Will those questions that were emailed also be asked and answered later?*

Staff staff response: Yes, we have compiled the questions that were submitted, and we have asked the member agencies on the call to address those. Other comments are acknowledged.

- *Are you aware of the old Safe Routes to School Study? It must be about 20 years old.*

Staff staff response: Yes, we are aware of this previous effort.

- *Facebook live more accessible [as a virtual meeting platform]*

SMTC staff response: We feel that the combination of Zoom along with streaming to our YouTube channel provides options for accessibility. We will continue to investigate the use of other platforms as our virtual outreach efforts evolve.

Meeting evaluation results

21 responses were received on the post-meeting evaluation form. These are summarized below.

1. Does this meeting time (4:00 p.m. on a weekday) generally work for you?

[More Details](#)

 Insights

- Yes 20
- No 1



2. If this meeting time does not work well for you, what time - on weekdays - would you prefer? (If this time worked well, just leave this question blank.)

[More Details](#)

- Early morning (before 9:00 a.m.) 1
- Midday/lunch time (around n... 3
- Evening (6:00 p.m. or later) 3



3. Please rate the ease of use for the Zoom meeting platform on a scale of 1 (difficult to use) to 5 (very easy to use)

[More Details](#)

 Insights

21

Responses



4.62 Average Rating

4. Do you have a suggestion for a presentation topic or guest speaker for our next meeting?

- *Love hearing about all the current and planned projects; diving into some as you did today*
- *Biking/walking is only a viable option for me if the bus is also an option when it's late, the weather's bad, I'm hurt, so I would really like to know more about how projects like the EST are integrated with Centro's service.*
- *I81, BRT, Job access, Mobility*
- *Make sure the presenters speak to active transportation and stay topic. Much of what Onondaga County had to present had nothing to do with active transportation. Much credit to City & NYSDOT for their current initiatives.*
- *Suggest inviting Mello Velo, Syracuse Bicycle, and other bicycle shops.*
- *Getting communities of color direct information....just on the internet is not the best. There are community centers (ex. Those that are giving out food boxes on a regular, etc.) and other community groups that have*

people that are interested. BIPOC need to also be in the room and the intention to have them there is very important.

- *The city of Syracuse Bike plan. It is 9 years old. Is it still a thing?*
- *Someone from NYSDOT on the I-81 project and what will be done to facilitate people getting into and out of downtown. Transit? The last mile?*
- *Planned projects and programs to expand active transportation.*
- *As a follow-up to the first zoom, it might be of interest to know, if data is available, what the impact of the bike routes and walking trails are having in terms of their use, by season.*
- *Discussion of SMTC's Role in the planning and siting of very large commercial developments which affect/serve the region. Ex: The Amazon Warehouse in Town of Clay and the Technology Center planned in Cicero.*

5. Any other feedback you would like to offer about the meeting?

- *Appreciate the time!*
- *Nice job team!*
- *There was a good 'turn out' for a first attempt at a virtual meeting.*
- *Great variety of projects and updates. Well done.*
- *I'd like to thank you for doing a great job as host. You make it look easy. It's not!*
- *It would be good if there were time to answer questions.*
- *Good work, great opportunity to engage with people in a more informal, non-project specific way.*
- *Great meeting. Maybe advertise it a little more.*
- *Thanks for the invite. It was a very good meeting. A lot of good information and with a lot of good communication on the various topics brought up.*
- *The meeting was informational. I appreciated the visual presentation that showed the trails for those that may not have seen them from a top view. There was a nice time for questions...although shorter than wanted. Thank you for that time and the advisement that there will be a followup with answers to other questions sent in or in the chat. Looking forward to the next meetings as well.*
- *Nice meeting and good topic/content. Suggest including a couple more graphics from the speakers even if they don't have a formal presentation. NYSDOT did a good job with their powerpoint.*
- *A participant brought up inclusion and equity issues. Maybe a future presentation on this topic to show effective transportation equity strategies.*
- *I liked the zoom. Was easy to attend*
- *I had trouble getting in the meaning. I have been many zoom meetings. I wanted to take this the meeting on my iPad because it has a camera. I tried getting into the meeting by going to "zoom" and putting in the meeting number and the pass code. This did not work I got into a infinite registration loop which I had never seen before. I gave up and got on the meeting with my laptop. - no camera. I got in on my laptop using the link from the e-mail. I have never encountered this difficulty before.*
- *Great meeting!*
- *Very well done, in my opinion.*
- *Very welcome initiative and outreach by the SMTC and very accessible format. Thanks!*

SMTC staff response: We anticipate another Forum on Active Transportation in June, and will consider these suggestions as the topic of that meeting. We will also continue to work towards additional forums on other topics, and will look for additional ways to expand our outreach efforts to include a broader cross-section of the community.