

TOD in Your Downtown *Forum Series*

TAKING FIRST STEPS Toward a Transit Friendly Future

Thursday, June 4, 2026 | 9:30 am – 12:00 pm
NJ TRANSIT Headquarters, Newark, New Jersey



SPEAKERS



Elise Bremer-Nei, AICP, PP

Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator

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Elise Bremer-Nei, AICP, PP, is the Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator for the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) and has worked on local, county, regional and state active transportation projects for more than twenty-five years. Elise has managed NJDOT's Office of Bicycle and Pedestrian Programs, including the statewide Bike Ped Master Plan, and the Safe Routes to School and Local Planning Assistance programs. She currently oversees the NJDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Resource Center and staff managing the Office of Freight Planning and the Transit Village Initiative.

Originally from the Midwest, Elise received her Geography degree from Rutgers University and has previously worked for the Monmouth County Planning Board and for Urbitran Associates, a private engineering firm. She represents NJDOT on the New Jersey Trails Council and currently serves as chair of the Multi-Modal Task Force for the AASHTO Committee on Planning.



Stephanie DiPetrillo

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Stephanie DiPetrillo is a Senior Research Project Manager at the Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center (VTC) at Rutgers University. Her work focuses on the intersection of transportation investment, land use, and community development, with expertise in transit-oriented development, public transportation policy, and transportation accessibility. She leads NJTOD, a statewide initiative that promotes transit-friendly development through technical assistance, peer learning, and collaboration among municipalities, transportation agencies, and community partners. In addition to directing NJTOD, she manages research and technical assistance projects for NJ TRANSIT, the New Jersey Department of Transportation, and the Federal Transit Administration. Stephanie holds graduate degrees in planning and architecture and a BA in Economics from Rutgers University.



Walter C. Lane, AICP, PP

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Walter C. Lane, AICP, PP, serves as the Executive Director of the New Jersey Office of Planning Advocacy where he supports the State Planning Commission and staff to advance implementation of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan and works on a wide range of smart growth planning efforts. He has over twenty-nine years of land use, regional planning and transportation planning experience and has managed numerous award-winning projects. Walter is a licensed New Jersey Professional Planner and is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners. In December of 2022, he received the Budd Chavooshian Award for Outstanding Professional Planner from the New Jersey Chapter of the American Planning Association. Prior to his role at the New Jersey Office of Planning Advocacy, he worked for the Somerset County Planning Division for over twenty-seven years and served as the Director of Planning for over ten years. He is a graduate of Cook College, Rutgers University and holds a BS in Environmental Policy.



Jelena Lasko

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Jelena Lasko is a Senior Planner Transportation at the New Jersey Department of Transportation, where she oversees the Transit Village Initiative. Her most recent six years of employment have been spent in the Division of Statewide Planning, where she has helped lead the Transit Village Initiative. Her principal role is to collaborate with New Jersey communities seeking to become Transit Villages. She intends to build strong relationships with local communities by coordinating the Transit Village designation process from the initial pre-application meeting until the designation is received.

Jelena's sphere of interest encompasses land use planning and zoning, transit-oriented development (TOD), Complete Streets policies and implementation, community engagement, equity, environmental justice, and Smart Growth principles. She graduated with a Master of Integrated Urbanism and Regional Development from Belgrade University, Republic of Serbia.



Michael J. Manzella, AICP

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Michael J. Manzella, AICP, serves as the Director of Statewide Planning at NJDOT. The Division includes the Bureau of Statewide Strategies (BSWS) and the Bureau of Research, Innovation, and Information Transfer (BRIIT) and provides broad, future-oriented direction for the Department's missions and programs, engages in strategic, performance-based planning and asset management, and develops innovative transportation solutions to enhance mobility, reliability, safety, and quality of life. Mr. Manzella received a Bachelor of Engineering degree in Engineering Management with a Minor in Pre-Law and Public Policy from Stevens Institute of Technology in 2009 and a Master of City and Regional Planning degree with a concentration in Transportation Planning and Policy from the Edward J. Bloustein School at Rutgers University in 2014. Mike has previously served as the Director of Transportation in both the City of Jersey City and the City of Asbury Park as well as the Deputy City Manager in Asbury Park.



Megan Massey, AICP, PP

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Megan Massey, AICP, PP, directs the Transit Friendly Planning program at NJ TRANSIT, a program established in 1999 to support communities in planning for transit-oriented and transit-supportive development at and around NJ TRANSIT passenger facilities. She joined NJ TRANSIT in 2018 after serving as a Transportation Planner for Hudson County, managing corridor studies, the Open Space Trust Fund update, and several NJTPA-funded planning initiatives. Megan serves on Red Bank's Planning Board and Environmental Commission. She holds a Master of City and Regional Planning from Rutgers University.



Kristen Mitchell

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Kristen Mitchell is Director of Transit Oriented Development at NJ TRANSIT, where she advances TOD on NJ TRANSIT-owned land, coordinating with internal and external partners to increase ridership, expand transportation choices, create and

capture value, foster economic growth, and promote development of walkable, sustainable, equitable, and complete communities. Ms. Mitchell's prior experience includes Community Engagement and Merchant Support lead for the Baltimore Public Markets Corporation, Executive Director of the Market Center Merchants Association and Market Center Community Development Corporation in downtown Baltimore, Manager of the Infrastructure and Development unit at the Maryland Department of Planning, Economic Development Officer for Baltimore Development Corporation, and Project Manager for 1000 Friends of Maryland.



Michelle Osorio

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Michelle Osorio is a Senior Small Business Liaison for the New Jersey Economic Development Authority. Michelle's role is to share information and educate business owners and community stakeholders about opportunities available to small businesses in New Jersey. Michelle Osorio has spent her career supporting entrepreneurs and business owners across the state. Michelle has helped thousands of business owners navigate the complexities of business ownership in Spanish and English. Michelle is passionate about sharing information and improving equal access to opportunities for New Jersey small business owners.



Vanessa N. Quijano

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Vanessa Quijano is President of Downtown New Jersey, the state's only organization dedicated exclusively to strengthening and promoting vibrant downtowns and commercial districts across New Jersey. A respected leader in economic development, strategic communications, and community revitalization, she works to advance partnerships, policies, and initiatives that support thriving local economies throughout the state.

Professionally, Vanessa serves as Sr. Public Affairs and Communications Advisor, Northeast Region for NeighborWorks America, where she leads corporate visibility initiatives for NeighborWorks America in the northeast region, promoting the work of 68 Network member community development organizations. She builds and foster relationships with partners expanding the mission to create opportunities for people to live in affordable homes, improve their lives and strengthen their communities. Prior to joining NeighborWorks America, Vanessa held roles at New Jersey Community Capital, Invest Newark, and Jersey City Economic Development Corporation.



Simran S. Riar

Senior Planner

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Simran S. Riar is a Senior Planner at the Department of Community Affairs Office of Local Planning Services providing technical planning assistance to distressed municipalities. Simran specializes in redevelopment and master planning, focusing on expanding access to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure through policy implementation and public-private partnerships.



Jenin Shah, AICP

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Jenin Shah, AICP, is a senior planner with over seventeen years of experience in urban planning, downtown revitalization, mixed-use development, and community engagement. She is an active member of the American Planning Association and holds AICP certification.

In her role at the Division of Local Planning Services (LPS) within the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA), she is responsible for providing technical planning assistance to municipalities across New Jersey. She specializes in developing master plans, redevelopment plans, main street planning, transit oriented planning, interagency coordination, as well as engaging diverse stakeholders through robust community outreach processes.

Prior to joining DCA, Jenin served as a Senior Planner and Senior Project Manager at Beyer Blinder Belle Architects & Planners, a consulting firm specializing in master planning, development frameworks, zoning and feasibility analysis, campus planning, urban design, and community engagement.



Jonathan Sternesky, DPA

Director, Policy and External Affairs

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Jonathan Sternesky has been with the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency (NJHMFA) since November 2018. As Director of Policy and External Affairs, Jonathan's responsibilities include providing data and policy analysis to inform policymakers, developing new programs to further the Agency's mission, and

ensuring public and stakeholder knowledge of Agency accomplishments and programs. During his tenure at NJHMFA, the Agency has seen historic investments in affordable housing production, the creation of a permanent funding source for special needs housing, and the passage of landmark legislation. Prior to this role, Jonathan worked for the Township of East Brunswick, as their Economic Development Officer, and prior to that, as Legislative Director to a member of the New Jersey General Assembly, where he developed and assisted in the advancement of legislation addressing issues in criminal justice, healthcare, housing and higher education. He has a B.A. from Kean University, an MPA from Seton Hall University, and a Doctorate in Public Administration from West Chester University.



Michael Swan, AICP, PP
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Michael Swan, AICP, PP, is the Assistant Director of the Transit Friendly Planning Program at NJ TRANSIT. Michael helps lead the Program's local technical assistance projects, Transit Village Initiative, TOD projects, community engagement activities, and other transit friendly programming. With several years of experience in transportation and land use planning, he has worked on TOD vision plans, long-range transportation plans, community master plans, and TOD projects. Michael has a Master of City and Regional Planning from the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University. Michael is a licensed Professional Planner in the state of New Jersey.



NJTOD, published since 2005, is designed to keep municipal officials, planners, and advocates up-to-date on the potential for development and redevelopment around transit stations. This partnership between NJ TRANSIT and the Bloustein School's Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center (VTC) at Rutgers University aims to enrich the transit-oriented development (TOD) conversation in New Jersey's diverse communities by highlighting what is happening in the state and around the country: best practices, model programs, legislation, and local problem-solving experiences. Visit us at: www.njtod.org, follow us, or register for our weekly newsletter at: go.rutgers.edu/njtod-news



Downtown New Jersey is a non-profit membership organization of individuals, businesses, developers, government agencies, and local and regional entities that are passionate about downtowns. Downtowns reflect our communities' unique identities, provide a focal point, a convenient local place of commerce, and offer a sense of place where people can gather and truly be a community. DNJ provides advocacy, education, and technical assistance resources dedicated to ensuring the vitality of our downtowns. Learn more at: www.downtownnj.com



The Transit Friendly Planning Program at NJ TRANSIT is a community-focused planning program at New Jersey's statewide public transportation agency. It offers decades of experience in assisting municipalities across New Jersey with community engagement, data, education, strategic partnerships, and technical assistance centered around station area planning. The Program strives to promote equitable, economically resilient, and environmentally sustainable development that improves the quality of life for all. Connect with us at: www.njtransit.com/transitfriendly