National RTAP
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Building Better Bus Stops Webinar Questions and Answers

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Bus stops provide vital connections between public transportation and communities they serve. To support planning and design of bus stops, PennDOT and the Pennsylvania Public Transportation Association (PPTA) developed the Building Better Bus Stops Resource Guide This Resource Guide uniquely highlights how proactive planning and successful partnerships can strengthen transit as a viable transportation option, particularly in rural and suburban communities.

Andy Batson with PennDOT and Natasha Manbeck with McMahon Associates, Inc. provided an overview of the guide, highlighting ways to incorporate transit in local plans/policies and build strategic partnerships to implement better bus stops. Rich Schlameuss from Monroe County Transit Authority provided insights and real-world examples of rural bus stop improvement projects.

Access the webinar recording and presentation.

Q: Talk about using solar to light bus shelters.

A: Rich answered that when we build our shelters, we add solar lighting to them. The panels have to be checked every once in a while, and the battery has to be checked every year. They eventually die on you and the technology 10 years ago is not as good as the technology is today, so you'll need to work on some upgrades over the course of five or ten years.

Q: Would love to hear more about easement management and how it relates to shelter maintenance and snow clearance! Does the agency typically take responsibility or does an established MOU dictate that the adjacent property owner must contribute to maintenance and execute snow clearance?

A: Rich answered that we typically build the agreement (we call it a license agreement) so we have a license to use the property and the location that we site the shelter is responsible for ice, snow, debris, and garbage around the shelter. We'll go in every six months or so, depending on wintertime

conditions, and clean out the inside of it. We have a pressure washer and other material that will go in and clean the shelters, but we typically try to have the property owner provide maintenance since they have staff right there to do the work, so that's typically how we've been handling that.

Q: Can you send examples of hold harmless agreements you have with others to put a shelter in a location.

A: The Building Better Bus Stops guide does not have that, but as part of the ongoing work that is an issue and a question that we've received from other participants in other training programs, Natasha answered. Rich explained that we include that as part of our lease agreement or agreement with the property owner we typically try to cover that so that takes the liability away from the property owner, so we include that bus shelter as part of the shelter and that area as part of our risk for the transit authority. That's just one way to do it and that helps the property owner feel a little more comfortable about placing the shelter there. Louisiana DOTD provides a Hold Harmless template.

Q: Anyone know which of the panelists had worked on e-ink and shelter designs? Our agency is exploring a way to improve communications with our riders/community, and I would like to reach out to learn about their work on that.

A: Rich Schlameuss - rschlameuss@gomcta.com, (570)243-3432

Q: How could an organization go about getting funding to help with this issue?

A: Here are some examples of funding for bus stop improvements. National RTAP eNews regularly lists federal funding sources. You can sign up here.

1. Federal
   - FTA Formula Funds (Sections 5307 / 5311)
   - Bus and Bus Related Facilities (Section 5309)
2. State DOTs
3. MPOs
   - Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ)
4. Competitive Grant Programs
   - AARP Community Challenge: Due 3/22/21

Q: Will the PPT be forwarded to attendees?

A: It was forwarded to attendees the next day, and it is available here.

Q: What are strategies for bus stops if a project already began and the original project didn't consider bus stop infrastructure?

A: You find you know who your champions are, explained Natasha. It's important to establish those champions up front because establishing your army of champions - the more people that know you're interested in improving bus stops and bus stops are important to your transit agency or your community - the more success you'll have. Rich has seen this he's talked to his county planning agency staff, and he's gotten them on board and again. I think that one of the keys is to see what can

be done. Designs are constantly evolving. Engineers are always coming up with something new and unexpected and so it's not unusual for being in the middle of a design process and someone to come and say: I didn't know there was that utility buried under the ground or I didn't know that the right-of-way line was here and not there. Saying that we need to think about a bus stop isn't an unusual part of a design process if it wasn't considered up front, so I think the first step is to ask. The second step is to figure out what can be done. Maybe you don't need a shelter or a bench, but you can get the connecting pedestrian infrastructure, or you can get again reserving right-of-way or space for the future, so that when maybe other funds or other opportunities become available, it's a little bit easier. Really make sure they're incorporating it from the beginning.

Q: What has been the results of having these better bus stops?

A: Various transit agencies and communities across Pennsylvania have been implementing bus stop improvements over many years to enhance safety, accessibility, visibility, connectivity, and community aesthetics. The Building Better Bus Stops Resource Guide was completed at the end of 2020. Since that time, PennDOT and PPTA have been providing presentations across the state to educate planners, engineers, municipal representatives, transit agency representatives, and other partners about the guide. PennDOT and PPTA are aware of several early "success stories" of communities that have used the guide to update municipal ordinances and bus stop improvements that have been incorporated into other transportation projects.

Q: Near side vs far side stop placement was discussed; can the panel expand upon transit signal priority and queue jump considerations in relation to.

A: A general overview of Transit Signal Priority (TSP) and queue jump lanes is provided on page 2-17 of the Building Better Bus Stops Resource Guide. National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO)'s Transit Street Design Guide is another resource with information on queue jump lanes and bus stop locations. While far-side stops are more commonly used in conjunction with queue jump lanes, there are conditions where a near-side stops may be advantageous. Transit planners and traffic engineers can assist with evaluating stop placement based on the traffic volumes, levels of congestion, bus headways, roadside features, proposed signal modifications, and other characteristics of the transit corridor.

Q: Any thoughts on Adopt-a-stop programs?

A: The panelists do not have any first-hand knowledge or experience with adopt-a-stop programs. However, it sounds like a cost-effective option to keep bus stops clean and accessible while building broad partnership to support transit.

Q: Do you have any advice on where to begin partnering with local municipalities to plan for better bus stops? We are a new transit system, we've been operating for one year and COVID has made building connections more difficult with the lack of in-person meeting options, etc.

A: Some ideas of potential strategies are listed below. Rich also said, "Feel free to give me a call – 570-243-3432 and we can talk about this..."

- Share your interest in improving bus stops and coordinating with municipalities with your Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), other regional planning body, or county planning organization. They may be able to help make contacts and identify resources.
- Select one or two existing bus stops where improvements are feasible and would be beneficial to riders and the community. Start by coordinating with the municipal representatives (including staff and elected officials) about potential concepts for bus stop improvements. Identify other partners that might have a vested interest in the bus stop improvements.
- Identify a new land development project or a transportation (roadway) improvement project along an existing bus route and coordinate with the project owner to consider incorporating bus stop improvements as part of the project.
- Select two or three key municipalities to start building relationships. Consider municipalities where there are more bus routes/stops, more growth potential, and an interest in supporting transit. Build relationships with staff, consultants, and/or elected officials by attending their regularly scheduled meetings and/or requesting meetings to discuss opportunities to work together.

Q: Small communities can't afford transit planners. How to best incorporate this in Comp Plans? Is there recommended language for coordination MOU?

A: Even if there isn't a dedicated "transit planner," a community planner with some training and education can help to incorporate transit into various plans and consider transit as part of land development reviews. Feel free to share the recording of the National RTAP Webinar and the Building Better Bus Stops Resource Guide with planners. Some considerations for incorporating transit into municipal plans are provided on pages 1-6 and 1-7 of the Building Better Bus Stops Resource Guide.

Q: Do the typology include bus park as a multimodal hub such as Park and Ride supporting infrastructures?

A: The typologies are available in Part 3 of the Building Better Bus Stops Resource Guide. The typologies do not specifically include a multimodal hub. However, the typologies do include stops within a site and some of the considerations might be applicable for a multimodal hub with parking. Additionally, page 2-13 of the Building Better Bus Stops Resource Guide provides some information about transfer centers and super stops.

If you have additional questions, please contact National RTAP at info@nationalrtap.org. The panelists shared additional resource documents that we would be able to share with requesters.