

Executive Summary

The Erie Boulevard East Pedestrian Study was completed by the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council on the behalf of the City of Syracuse (City) and New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT).

Erie Boulevard is one of the primary east-west travel routes through Onondaga County. This study has focused on the portion of Erie Boulevard East (Route 5) between Beech Street in the City of Syracuse and East Genesee Street (Route 92) in the Town of DeWitt. The study also includes the intersection of East Genesee Street/Jamesville Road located just west of the Erie Boulevard/East Genesee Street intersection.

The City and NYSDOT expressed concern about several pedestrian safety incidents along this corridor, including some fatalities involving pedestrians trying to cross the heavily traveled boulevard. Through this study, SMTC has conducted a thorough investigation of the existing sidewalk system along Erie Boulevard East (Route 5) between Beech Street and East Genesee Street (Route 92). The investigation included a pedestrian accident history and identifies pedestrian needs and improvement opportunities (including Americans with Disability Act (ADA) compliance), especially in regards to the safe crossing of Erie Boulevard.

SMTC staff conducted this study with the advice and assistance of a Study Advisory Committee (SAC), which met four times over the course of the study. A public meeting was held in March 2017 to share the existing conditions analysis with the public, as well as ask for their input on how to improve pedestrian access along the corridor. Most public comments received through this study acknowledged a need for improved pedestrian crossings throughout the corridor, including crosswalks, pedestrian push buttons and improved curb ramps. A second opportunity for public input was held via public comment period from January 12 through January 31, 2018. During this time the Draft Final Report, which included recommendations for improving pedestrian mobility within the study area, was posted on the SMTC web site and publicized through a press release, SMTC's Facebook, and email to the project stakeholders list, in an effort to solicit public comment.

Demographics

The neighborhood surrounding the Erie Boulevard corridor has relatively high population density. High rates of poverty, Limited English Proficiency, and households without a vehicle exist west of Seeley Road along Erie Boulevard East; these are also high-priority Environmental Justice target areas. Although the existing percentage of commuters who walk to work varies throughout most of the study area, the high population density along with other factors, especially the relatively low car ownership, suggest the potential for an even greater number of people that could walk to work. Improving the pedestrian infrastructure along Erie Boulevard East could encourage more walkers throughout the study area.

Empire State Trail and Pedestrian Safety Action Plan

During the development of the assessment and recommendations portion of this study, Governor Andrew Cuomo initiated the Empire State Trail project, which will impact much of the Erie Boulevard East corridor. In his January 2017 State of the State addresses, Governor Cuomo announced his plans for completing the Hudson River Valley Greenway and Erie Canalway trails by 2020, to create the Empire State Trail.

Planning for the local portions of the Empire State Trail/Erie Canalway Trail picked up significantly in spring/summer 2017. During this time, SMTC staff was involved in discussions and meetings with the NYSDOT and their consultant on the Empire State Trail planning project, the Town of DeWitt, and the City of Syracuse, much of which focused on Erie Boulevard East between Beech Street and Bridge Street. The consultant finished their planning work on the project in late October 2017. All of the intersections along Erie Boulevard East that are included in the NYSDOT's Empire State Trail project are part of the SMTC's Erie Boulevard East Pedestrian study. As of the writing of this document, the NYSDOT was in the early stages of preliminary design for the local portions of the Empire State Trail. The trail will be located on Erie Boulevard East, likely along the north side of the road from Beech Street to Teall Avenue, and in the median of Erie Boulevard from Teall Avenue to Bridge Street.

In addition to the Empire State Trail, NYSDOT recently informed the SMTC that Erie Boulevard East will be examined as part of the State's Pedestrian Safety Action Plan (PSAP). The purpose of the PSAP is to identify current safety conditions and implement a distinct set of education, engineering and enforcement countermeasures that can be accomplished over the next 5 years to improve pedestrian safety. As of January 2018, the NYSDOT was proposing the limits of their Erie Boulevard East PSAP to be from Bridge Street to East Genesee Street (although locations on Erie Boulevard west of Bridge Street that are part of the Empire State Trail will also likely receive treatment consistent with the PSAP guidelines). NYSDOT expects to develop a strategy for prioritizing signalized locations along the corridor.

Existing Conditions and Assessment

The SMTC completed an inventory of existing pedestrian facilities along the corridor in regards to ADA (American's with Disability Act) accessibility, and gathered traffic counts (including vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian traffic) along the corridor. This information is summarized in the following table, *Existing ADA Accessibility for Pedestrian Accommodations (curb ramps, crosswalks, and pedestrian buttons), Total Entering Vehicles During all Peak Periods, and Pedestrian and Bicycle Movements at Signalized Intersections.*

Existing ADA Accessibility for Pedestrian Accommodations (curb ramps, crosswalks and pedestrian buttons), Total Entering Vehicles During all Peak Periods, and Pedestrian and Bicycle Movements at Signalized Intersections

Crossing Erie Boulevard East	Curb ramps, crosswalks and ped buttons	Total entering vehicles during all peak periods (7-9 a.m., 11 a.m. – 1 p.m., 4-6 p.m.)	Pedestrian and Bicycle Movements – 18 Hour count (5:00 a.m. – 11:00 p.m.)	
			Pedestrian	Bicyclist
Beech Street	●	6,538	217	42
Teall Avenue/Columbus Avenue	◎	10,684	287	32
Peat Street/Westmoreland Avenue	◎	7,646	203	43
Midler Avenue/Seeley Road	◎	12,011	246	18
Former Sam’s Club Driveway	○	*	*	*
Smith Street	○	*	*	*
Thompson Road	○	16,501	69	8
DeWitt Town Center Driveway (north)/Empire Plaza Driveway	○	11,003	76	9
Bridge Street/Orrick Road	○	14,396	42	8
Fietta Road	○	11,441	63	6
Kinne Road	○	12,226	76	11
ShoppingTown Mall/Grenfell Road	◎	*	*	*
ShoppingTown Drive	○	*	*	*
East Genesee Street	◎	16,680	76	8
Crossing East Genesee Street				
Jamesville Road	◎	*	*	*

*Traffic counts were not conducted at these locations

Key:

- ADA accessible on all approaches
- ◎ Present on some approaches
- Not present

In general, of the locations where counts were conducted, those with the highest vehicular volumes are in the Town of DeWitt and have fewer pedestrians and cyclists than those in the City of Syracuse. City intersections have more pedestrian and bicycle traffic than DeWitt locations. There also tends to be less vehicular traffic in the City. Most City intersections have at least some accessible features, while most Town of DeWitt locations do not have any accessible features. Beech Street in the City of Syracuse is fully accessible, and is the location with the fewest vehicles, but with significant pedestrian and bicyclist volumes. On Erie Boulevard, the intersection with the highest vehicular volume (Thompson Road) has no pedestrian accommodations and fewer pedestrians and cyclists than at City intersections along the corridor.

Recommendations

Because of the on-going SMTC study, the Empire State Trail project, and the new PSAP information, the SMTC has worked carefully to coordinate the recommendations of the SMTC *Erie Boulevard East Pedestrian Study* so that efforts are not being duplicated. The SMTC developed recommendations based on the data and assessment presented in this document. Recommendations fell into six categories:

- Implement pedestrian improvements at signalized intersections, prioritized by need,
- Implement recommendations from the Empire State Trail, which is focused on the area between Beech Street and Bridge Street on Erie Boulevard East,
- Implement future recommendations from the NYSDOT PSAP, primarily focused on the area between Bridge Street and East Genesee Street,
- Implement recommendations from the SMTC's Central DeWitt Mobility Plan, which is focused on the small portion of East Genesee Street included in the Erie Boulevard East Pedestrian Study,
- Continue to seek opportunities for access management along Erie Boulevard East, and
- Consider pedestrian needs in the municipal site plan review process.

The study recommendations in this plan lean heavily on the outcomes associated with the planning of the Empire State Trail and the NYSDOT PSAP. The NYSDOT has utilized data gathered by the SMTC during the Erie Boulevard East Pedestrian Study (traffic counts, accident data, field work, etc.) to inform the development of the Empire State Trail/Erie Canalway Trail along Erie Boulevard East as well as to inform the PSAP.

Although there is a desire to develop a long-term multi-modal plan for the Erie Boulevard East corridor, the intention of *this* study has been to examine *current issues* and concerns relative to pedestrian travel along this corridor, and develop recommendations that seek to address these current issues in the near-term.