All Aboard!
How Municipal Cooperation Averted Transportation Trauma

NJLM's New Officers
NJ DEP Commissioner Bob Martin Reflects on 8 Years

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We have spent the last three months conducting elections, reviewing our progress through 2017, surveying municipal officials, and preparing the path forward for 2018. The League’s new leadership, elected at the Annual Business Meeting, is in place and provides both continuity in our efforts and focus on the major municipal issues that must be addressed. Take a moment to review the League leaders found on page 48.

At the Annual Conference Business Meeting, the League also adopted a number of resolutions to focus our policy agenda and call attention to issues critical to our municipalities and our state. One of those was a co-sponsored resolution to extend the Interest Arbitration Cap. Since last summer you have seen the League call for the extension of the cap on interest arbitration awards, a cap set to expire December 31. Toward that end, we are continuing efforts to inform the legislature and the media about this critical property tax driver. We will have a lobby day in Trenton to drive that point home and will be sending out information so you can make plans to attend.

Your local leadership and participation in League advocacy efforts is critical to successfully controlling municipal expenses. Get to know your State and Federal legislative delegations. Communicate the municipal perspective to them respectfully and repeatedly. Your leadership in that effort is important and starts with just a phone call or email of introduction your State Senator, Members of the Assembly, and Representative in Congress.

There are other major municipal issues we will grapple with in 2018 and beyond, but first we must address the cap on interest arbitration because without control over our expenses, municipalities cannot effectively address our state’s residents’ number-one concern.

The League also provides a direct link to state leadership each year with a gathering in Trenton. The 2018 Mayors Legislative Day will be held March 14 at the State House Annex and feature opportunities to speak with new administration cabinet members and high-ranking state officials. More information was mailed to each municipality. Please join us for this opportunity to prepare for a year of excellence in local government.
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Reconnecting Communities
Rethinking roads to make them safer, and make residents healthier, as they foster economic development

By Cathleen Lewis, Director, Public Affairs & Government Relations, AAA Northeast; Councilwoman, Lawrence Township (Mercer)

Transportation infrastructure is more than moving cars, people, and goods. When done right, it is about connecting communities and that will be truer than ever in the future.
In the modern era roads have defined our communities, often by creating borders and establishing zoning delineations. While in some ways this can be good—it makes it easy to keep high-speed traffic off local roads and it creates clear areas where work and play occur—but it also divides communities. Large, multi-lane roadways are difficult to cross, meaning that despite being a half mile away, a high school student needs to be bussed instead of walking or that an employee has to decide between making a run across the road or riding an extra 40 minutes on the bus to get to the other side of the road.

Those connections offer municipalities a wealth of opportunities: they make the communities safer, they make residents healthier, and they foster economic development.

**Reducing crash risk**

In 2016 the United States experienced a 5.6% increase in fatal crashes, New Jersey saw a 7% increase last year. Nationwide pedestrian fatalities increased by 492 (a 9% increase), and are at their highest number since 1990; in New Jersey, 607 pedestrians were killed in 2016 (an 8% increase). New Jersey pedestrian fatalities are up 6% from the same time last year and account for more than a quarter of all roadway fatalities.

Making roads safer for all users is the first goal of the Complete Streets program. When looking at pedestrian crashes, more than 50% of those fatal incidents occurred on an aerial roadway, more than 40% of pedestrian fatalities occurred where no crosswalks were available. By utilizing Complete Streets principles—encouraging multimodal use through education, enforcement, and engineering—we can work to make streets safer for all users.

Identifying areas where there is an increased risk of crash—unmarked crosswalks, frequently used pedestrian trails without sidewalks, and dangerous intersections—is the first step to making streets safer. Finding the right mix of education, enforcement, and engineering can take time, but will help encourage safe multimodal transportation, reconnecting residents to downtowns, to parks, and to neighborhoods.

Multimodal communities are more likely to have vibrant downtown communities. The ability to not just grab dinner but to wander through a few shops or take a walk is something that is key to the future of our communities.

“Making roads safer for all users is the first goal of the Complete Streets program.”

These roadways were built to quickly move cars, with little regard for neighborhoods or connectivity. Today, nearly 50 years later, we are trying to find ways to solve the problems presented by these roadways. In many cases we are reconnecting communities to make our residents safer, healthier, and happier.

Those connections will be made by changing the way we move, refocusing on bike and pedestrian pathways, making roads safer for all users through road diets and engineering and incorporating new technologies to make roads safer by moving cars smarter. Transportation choices will change as technology reshapes our needs—car sharing, microtransit, and on-demand transportation will all serve to connect more people to transit options, to downtowns, and to each other.

It’s this reconnection that is going to be key to municipalities in the future.

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**Automotive Outlook**

For many families one or zero cars will become the norm, with one or both parents opting to use either microtransit to get to local offices or transit and utilizing autonomous car sharing services to provide family transportation at least part of the time.

Families may also use walking and biking as a primary mode of transportation as the network of safe roadways and trails becomes larger, eliminating many of the short car trips to stores or restaurants in the area.

Only families with heavy travel schedules may opt to purchase even one vehicle as the cost to purchase and repair them become prohibitive as the technology becomes more complex.
walk before dessert encourages community engagement and means more money gets into the local economy. By now hopefully most communities have seen the benefits of encouraging multimodal transportation in their towns as we continue to see stronger commitments to Complete Streets and increased pedestrian and bike paths. But we need to do more than just add walkways to major arteries. We need to look to integrate new technologies into our infrastructure.

Our roadways are becoming more dangerous. Distraction, whether it’s in our hand (phones) or in our car, has taken our attention off the roadways at the same time that more and more people are walking and biking in our roadways. Technology is the cause of many of these new risks but at the core is human error (accounting for 94% of all crashes)–we know that looking at our phone when walking across the street or driving down the road we should focus on the road, and yet we don’t.

Technology and safety
As fatalities on the roadways climb, it comes at a time when the cars themselves are safer than ever–airbags, backup cameras, lane detection, and other driver assist programs all can make our roadways safer. Technology and engineering can have a major impact on making our roads safer and changing the way we live and travel.

Right now a small percentage of vehicles include advanced driver assist systems or semi-autonomous systems, but each year the numbers grow and they are integrated into more affordable vehicles. Today these technologies rely on cameras and sensors to determine placement of the vehicles and to trigger alerts, but technology continues to improve and the next step will be to have cars talking to each other and to infrastructure.

While we won’t see fully connected cars or infrastructure for years to come we will start to see technology integrated into both in the coming years–and planning for those changes will be key to keeping our roadways safe today and preparing for tomorrow. While today smart traffic signals can use sensors to help move traffic along more quickly, tomorrow that same infrastructure may be able to be used to talk to connected cars–giving them time to slow down even before the they can see the light.

Finding ways to incorporate technology into infrastructure projects now will pave the way for safer roadways and will make our roads safer and less congested in the short term. But as we explore these new technologies we also need to be mindful that new autonomous vehicles are unlikely to replace the family car. The technologies used to power them are just too expensive to make it worthwhile for most New Jerseys to purchase, especially when the typical vehicle sits unused for more than 95% of its life, instead sitting parked in a driveway or parking lot somewhere.

Instead car sharing and on-demand microtransit will close the transportation gap for most people. This change will take place most quickly in areas that are already pedestrian friendly. Suburbs that are surrounded by transit will be the first to be impacted in those areas. On-demand microtransit (like Uberpool) will be able to close not just the first and last mile gaps but the five-mile gaps as well.

In the end these new technologies and transportation alternatives will do much to strengthen communities–tying them together, encouraging local businesses, and keeping residents safer and healthier.
Show off your City!
And win a League publication!

Send us photos of your municipality!
Help us showcase our beautiful state by sending photos of your tourist attractions, downtown areas, economic development initiatives, parks, city halls and new projects.

All entries will be posted on the League’s Facebook page, website and some featured in the April issue of NJ Municipalities, and possibly other issues. A winner will be chosen and receives a free League publication of their choice!

Photos should be high resolution jpegs, at least 1MB in size. Please provide photo credit if necessary.

Photos can be submitted to aspiezio@njslom.org, or mailed on CD or flash drive to 222 West State Street, Trenton, NJ 08608.

Deadline to submit is February 1.

Entry details: Unfortunately stockphotos and images that are too low resolution will not be considered. By submitting a photo you are agreeing that you own the rights to the photo and that NJLM has permission to use the photo in NJ Municipalities, on NJLM’s social media and website, and on other printed materials. A winner will be chosen at random on February 15. Please include your Facebook profile name and we will tag your photo on Facebook!

#PictureNJ
Municipalities walk a fine line between maintaining a comfortable sense of a consistent hometown and pushing forward with new services, technology, and development. Nowhere is that more clear than in the world of transportation.

While people enjoy the convenience that is a hallmark of so many New Jersey towns, they certainly don’t enjoy the inconvenience of some of the maintenance of the aging transit system. This was particularly apparent this summer for passengers from municipalities along the Morris & Essex Line of NJ Transit into New York as the “Summer of Hell” descended and commutes to and from the city went from direct trips to journeys funneled through Hoboken.

The Mayors and officials from towns impacted by the work quickly organized, planned, and communicated with other towns, citizens, and NJ Transit to make a potential mess much less. As the rails, bridges, and roads of the state continue to demand repair and other work, municipalities will continue to answer the call to move forward in ways that meets the needs of citizens today and into the future.

Time Capsule: 1990-2000

October 1999 – Community Effort
Then Woodbridge Mayor James McGreevey cut the ribbon in May 1999 to dedicate the Woodbridge Community Playground, paid for by community fundraisers ranging from a dog show and logo t-shirt sale to a pancake breakfast and Police vs. Harlem Wizards charity basketball game. Upon reaching the goal to purchase the pieces to create the park, more than 800 volunteers worked over a weekend to put the site together, illustrating the town motto: “Woodbridge Works.”

October 1995 – Recognizing Service
New Jersey Municipalities shared the news of then Harrison Town Mayor Frank E. Rodgers’ recognition as the longest-serving mayor in the U.S. Rodgers served his town for a total of 58 years, in the Mayor’s office from 1946 to 1995. Inspired by this and acknowledging “that there are many other mayors who have given many years of service,” the League created a new Mayors Hall of Fame.

June 1990 – Log Cabin Community
Medford Lakes shared a picture of day to day life in the town. The woodsy, small community in Southern NJ is the only municipality in the state whose municipal building is a refurbished log cabin and the population has embraced this building style in a big way: with only 5,000 residents, 250 of the homes in Medford Lakes are log cabins!

February 1992 – Revitalizing DOWNTOWNS
Downtown Revitalizations seem to ebb and flow over the years. In February 1992, downtowns were back and NJ Municipalities put the spotlight on the cooperative community efforts to revitalize the state’s downtowns, including façade renovations, new signs, and canopies along with public sidewalk improvements that gave a dramatic new look to downtown Madison.
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